Lim, Rasul, Herrera in two opposing Senate slates

Pope calls for new int'l order based on UN goals

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II rang in the New Year on Thursday with a renewed call for peace in the Middle East and Africa and the creation of a new world order based on respect for the dignity of man and equality among nations.

John Paul presided over a morning Mass inside St. Peter's Basilica on the

The pope, 2000 Bed directed his

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Opposition boasts 'powerhouse' slate

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Christine O. Avendaño

AFTER Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda accepted actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s invitation to serve as his running mate, the opposition's focus has shifted to the Senate.

Legarda herself described the opposi-

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph | Friday, January 2, 2004 | 32 pages | vol. 19 | no. 20 | website: www.inq7.net

Loren splits opposition

New Year's Eve revelry 'generally peaceful'

By Blanche S. Rivera
and Christian V. Esguerra

FIREWORKS heard three more bodies in the smoky exhibit of the public market of Lucena City yesterday, bringing to 28 the death toll from a firecracker-ignited fire that reduced to the New Year in the country's nine-worst conditions of celebrating with noise and light to drive away evil and bad luck.

The tragedy was part of a vicious New Year's Eve fire begun at dusk on Wednesday and ended at dawn yesterday, leaving 420 people injured from firecracker-lighting accidents and 11 from celebratory gunfire in Metro Manila alone, according to police officials.

Twenty (ten cars) through Metro Manila on New Year's Eve, one more than the 19 recorded in 2002. (See related story, Page A18.)

"We're still getting reports from the field but I think the celebration was generally peaceful. Although the mood was very festive, there were less casualties than we expected," said Police Supt. Joel Goltiao.

Director Avelino Razon, the police director for operations, said the two-week holiday season was "generally peaceful and orderly."

There was no attack from terrorists or from the [communist] New People's Army Dec. 30 was not marked by any terrorist activity," he said.

On Dec. 30, 2000, suspected terrorists exploded five bombs in a light Railway Transit train and several other places in Metro Manila, killing 22 people.

Nationwide, the number of

POWER couple Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Loren Legarda make it official after their three-hour meeting in San Juan on Tuesday.

Some hope for FPJ, Ping to get together

By Jerry Esplanada and Michael Lim Ubac

BUT WHY her?

An opposition leader yesterday said movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s choice of Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda for his running mate has unsettled many in the opposition.

"Maraming nainitindi (Many were disheartened)" after Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III's announcement, ex-Sen. Francisco Tatad told the Inquirer. He did not name names, but said "they included guys close to FPJ. There were serious reservations. We're trying to get hold of Director for our organ."

Sotto had said that Legarda was the unanimous choice of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, but Tatad yesterday maintained that for many opposition members, the decision was "not final."

"Things could still change. The

[illegible] have Gordreting in the political camps of Joe and Jun. Panfilo Lacson, who is also running for president, could still work together in this point, forming the Lacson-Joe ticket officially [illegible]," Tatad said.

"We're still hoping for a united opposition and we have one whole month to work on that," he told the inquirer. "We have not given up ... We can still afford to be hopeful."

Tatad, chair of the advisory council of the opposition Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino [of deposed President Joseph Estrada], had

Lim, Rasul, Herrera in 2 slates

By Juliet L. Javellana

DON'T LOOK now, but the administration coalition's short list of Senate candidates includes names that also appear in the opposition's slate.

Senators Gregorio Honasan, ex-Interior Secretary Alfredo Lim, and ex-presidential adviser Santanina Rasul-Hernandez are prospective candidates on both Freedom Bloc-papal Kampi slate and actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s other.

Honasan, a labor leader who came to national prominence as a member of the Reform Committee that investigated the Aquino assassination, also served a term in the House of Representatives. He was closely identified with the late Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, his colleague in the Senate.

Lim, a police general who became director of the National Bureau of Investigation, also served as mayor of Manila. He ran for president in 1998, and later served as President Joseph Estrada's secretary of Interior and Local Government.

Hernandez is the daughter of former Sen. Santanina Rasul, the late Muslim leader's sister in the Senate. She was a fellow at the US Institute of Peace, a US-funded organization tasked with developing strategies for peace in

'Palace will become MTRCB'

WITH a Pan-Luzon stakes, there will be no need for a Movies and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) to screen movies and television programs, Jaime Ongpin, Pampanga Congressman-elect has said.

The "super typhoon" candidate of movie star Fernando Poe Jr. and broadcaster-turned-senator Loren Legarda is the top pick being buffeted by brickbats.

Allies of President Gloria Arroyo and Sen. Panfilo Lacson refuse to take seriously the "blockbuster

All hands on deck for pols running for office

By Rob Cabreros

WHEN these hand signs during the electoral campaign. They could well spur the difference between defeat and victory.

This is a New Year suggestion to politicians who are running for office.

While they are reported to employ the "confusion of monkeys" in the election year of 2004, the Chinese Year of the Monkey, candidates should also consider whether they intend positive or negative vibes whenever they flash their party pep-gestures, according to a paranormal consultant.

The V or "Victory" sign, for example, is always a good opener because the index and middle fingers form the shape of a weapon. Or "catching blessings from heaven or scooping the will of the Divine," said Jolinsky Bautista, a psychic consulted by politicians, businessmen and show biz celebrities.

The so-called "I love you" sign [where the thumb, index finger and pinky stick out] is, on the contrary, a magnet for "negative

energies upon a hapa being," said Bautista, who said the three most "eccentric" meanings from ancient Indian teachings.

The "No. 1" sign [index finger pointing up] can be considered positive if the thumb and other fingers are "closed" tightly together and not pointing to the front. The way she said, the whole hand

WINNING HAND

EDDIE VILLANUEVA. Victory sign, a conspiracy to catch blessings.

FPJ. A wish or dream? Going for No. 1 or one bullet, or bullet.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL. Feeling A-OK, accepting applause, a sign to open doors to power.

RAUL ROCO. Index finger pointing upward, a sign to open doors to power.

PING LACSON. Clenched fist signifies determination to fight.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, 2004

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Cloudy and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with rain showers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers

Second **FRONTPAGE**

E-mail us at _____@inquirer.com.ph

INNOCENT VICTIM
Three-year-old Jacquilyn Dumaga suffered serious burns on her stomach when she was hit by an exploding firecracker during rowdous New Year's Eve celebrations. For stories and more photos (see pages A1, A12, A16 and A18.

Chinoys dump Ping for Poe, says solon

By Carlito Pablo and Christian V. Esguerra

MOVIE actor Fernando Poe Jr., and not Sen. Panfilo Lacson, is now the top choice for president of the affluent Chinese-Filipino community, which traditionally has been the biggest contributor to the political campaign coffers of national candidates.

Or so claimed Rep. Harry Angping (NPC), who hails from Binondoc or Chinatown.

"Before it was Ping Lacson's but now it's FPJ [Poe]," Angping said. "FPJ's popularity and the perception that he's a nice winner has caught up in the Chinese-Filipino community."

Angping's claim, however, was strongly disputed by Cibboi's Action Against Crime chair Vicente Ang See.

"He doesn't speak for the Chinese-Filipino community and neither do I," Ang-See told the Inquirer in a telephone interview yesterday.

In the first place, she said, the community has never come up with a solid vote for a lone candidate in past elections.

Based on informal surveys conducted in mostly Chinese-Filipino areas, Ang-See said there were "solid blocs" supporting President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Education Secretary Raul Roco and senator Lacson.

"It's too early to say that FPJ has already a group solidly behind him because he's a newcomer," she said.

Lacson had endorsed himself to sections of the Chinese-Filipino community for his accomplishments against kidnap-for-extortion gangs during his days as a police officer.

Angping, however, conceded that as in past elections, the Chinese-Filipino community will be divided among the competing candidates.

"Of course, some quarters will support GMA because she is the incumbent," said Angping, referring to President Macapagal.

He pointed out that by getting the nod of the Chinese-Filipino community, Poe would have "everything going for him."

Campaign contributions

"The campaign contributions will be there. FPJ is also popular among the grassroots," Angping said.

Poe's candidacy is being backed by the Koalisyon ng Maghahanggang Pilipino led by Rep. Edgardo Angara of the Lakas-NUCD-Kampi.

The KMP also counts the Partido ng Masang Pilipino of deposed President Joseph Estrada and the PDP-Laban of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel as team here.

Angping stressed that both of his party, the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Edgardo "Gardo" Cojuangco Jr., was also supporting Poe.

"If I lose it all—funds, popularity and machinery," said Angping. "He's going to have an easy ride to the finish line."

According to Ang-See, the votes of the Chinese-Filipino community were "basically insignificant because we're just talking one percent of the population."

"The ruler comes in the last that some businessmen can influence their workers or whom to vote for but that's it."

"If indeed the Chinese-Filipino community could swing votes, she said this would be exclusively in the Binondo congressional district in Manila which Angping represents.

Ang-See also described as a "myth" the impression that Chinese-Filipinos had big financial clout during elections.

"Ugnayan sila (they don't take chances)," she said. "Their (financial) support is always spread out but there's always a candidate who will get the lion's share."

Supreme Court to 'clock' employees

By Philip C. Tubeza

SOME 5,000 employees in the judiciary, the Supreme Court has ordered court employees all over the country to punch a hourly clock beginning next month.

In a memorandum, SC Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. ordered all employees, below the rank of judges, to use the hourly clocking Feb. 1 this year to record their arrival and departure times from work.

"Government officials and employees must give every minute of their prescribed official time to service the public and must work for every centavo paid to them by the government," Davide said.

He added that using a hourly clock would remove the perceived unfairness in recording work hours "solely on daily time records and logbooks where some may be really manipulated by their heads who come late or go home early as we know."

Davide also said that the use of the clock is in line with previous administrative circulars directing court officials to strictly observe official time, imposing disciplinary sanction for absenteeism and tardiness, and reiterating the Civil Service Commission's policy on habitual absenteeism.

Airline ordered to pay opera star

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court has upheld the lawsuit won by an Internet actress Anabelle Hernandez against Singapore Airlines for failing to fly her to Manila as scheduled in late January 1991.

The blonder and the "rude and unkind" behavior of the airline's ground personnel Persian Ave. "treated fatigue and skin rashes," and led to her performing "below par" before the King and Queen of Malaysia, the high court said.

"What a passenger contracts for a specific flight, he has a per year in making that chance should be respected. This choice, once exercised, must not be impaired by a breach on the part of the airline without the latter incurring any liability," said the 14-page decision penned by Justice Jose Catral Mendoza.

The SC's Second Division also affirmed the P475,000 in damages that a trial court had ordered Singapore Airlines to pay Persian Ave.

Fernandez had bought a Singapore Airlines ticket for a flight from Frankfurt, Germany to Singapore. From Singapore, she was to go on to Manila on Jan. 20, 1991.

She was going to Manila to pick up her wardrobe and rehearse for her performance before the King and Queen of Malaysia on Feb. 2 and 4. She was supposed to leave Manila on Jan. 29.

Her plane was delayed two hours in Frankfurt on Jan. 26, however, and she and 20 other passengers were not able to reach the connecting flight to Manila, despite assurances by Singapore Airlines personnel in Frankfurt that they would arrive in Singapore on schedule.

When she went to the Singapore Airlines counter in Changi Airport in Singapore the following day, a male employee was rude to her.

She explained her predicament but the employee "never [said]" excited. "It's your problem, not ours."

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Golez leaves Cabinet to run for Congress

By Alexis Pepa and Julie Lobo-Jiwilan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has lost another member of her Cabinet in the campaign for May's election after National Science and Technology chief Carlito Golez quit to run for a congressional seat in Pembagay City.

Golez, a graduate of the United States Naval Academy and a three-term congressman before he joined the Cabinet in March 2001, oversees policies on astronomy affairs against biotechnology and regional initiatives but had no direct control over money in banks.

The widely expected departure will bring a fifth new face into the President's inner circle until just over four months until national election on May 10.

He succeeded Jose Isidro Camacho quit as finance secretary in November. Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Interior Secretary Blas Ople died last month and Manuel Roxas and Simeon Datumanong, the trade and justice secretaries, respectively, left recently to prepare for their election campaigns.

Golez told reporters yesterday he would bow out in his resignation on Jan. 5 and register as a candidate on the same day. Candidates for more than 17,000 national, regional and local elected officials have until Monday to file their certificates of candidacy.

Golez said he had already informed President Macapagal of his decision. "I got her full blessing and understanding. It's all systems go."

He said he would run as a candidate of Bangi, Mr Macapagal's own party, for the city's congressional seat in the second district.

He said he was one afraid of running against Mayor Amy Bikoy in the Nacionalista Party. "This is my home turf," he said.

Bangsa, an actor-turned-politician who had a high-profile on-and-off affair with actress Kris Aquino, would be the official candidate of the ruling Lakas-CMD. for the newly created second district of Pembagay.

Golez boasted of helping the Macapagal administration as "the country's number one security manager," one of the closest allies of the president in the ranks of the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf from more than 1,000 to 400 and the killing or capture of ASG leaders Aldam Tilham, otherwise known as Abu Sabaya, Khadafy Janjalani, Abdul Muhsin Idris, Commander Global and Commander Robot.

Golez added that top militants of the Jemaah Islamiyah, Agus Dwikarna and Fathur Rohman Al Ghozi, were arrested or killed during his watch. Dwikarna was arrested in the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in March 2002, while Al-Ghozi was killed in a firefight with government forces in North Cotabato.

"We were rated by US Secretary Colin Powell as Asia's top performer in the area of counter-terrorism," he said.

Golez also said that during his term, the forces of the coalition ran Jail Nine People's Army had been reduced to 8,500 from a high of 13,000. He also said the administration had acted decisively on the Moglalo mutiny in Makati City.

"I leave the post of NSC with a heavy heart because of the warm and close relationship I had with the President," Golez said. **With Reuters**

Darkness still reigns in contested Laguna barangay

By Norman Bordadora

ONLY THE school house and a few homes nearby light up Bunsuran Cuyab.

The sound of a ring-tone once normally breaks the chirr of crickets in the dark but almost all residents of this community in Los Baños, Laguna, will have to wait the next day to recharge their cellular phones.

"We have to walk perhaps some 500 meters up the road to have our cell phones charged in some [home] houses near the school. Almost all of Cuyab's homes have yet to receive electricity," said Elsa Perez, a 46-year-old housewife in this barangay of some 300 or so families.

Like almost all people of Cuyab Elementary School, Elsa's 7-year-old daughter Maria Concepcion studies by kerosene and gas lamp but homework done literally by burning their midnight oil.

"The Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) started putting up electric posts in Cuyab as early as the 1990s during the Jesus administration," Perez said.

"But a temporary restraining order issued by the Supreme Court was invoked by the Palo ex one in preventing further development of our place," Perez said.

Cuyab's 217 hectares of land, planted to coconut, pineapple, coffee and fruit trees, is the subject of a 15-year dispute between the Palo family, which bought the land from the Manalo family in 1988, and the Cuyab farmers, who've tilled and lived on the land since 1958.

The Palo family started several court proceedings against the farmers in 1989.

While the farmers and the Palo family await the Supreme Court ruling on the question of Cuyab's coverage under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, the development of the community is on hold.

Cuyab never had electricity from the start. It's something we could somehow live without," said Sergio Cruza, Cuyab's barangay captain since 1997. Cruza is himself a farmer-claimant.

"The Palo family was able to use its influence to prevent Meralco from putting the electrification of Cuyab. They said the Supreme Court TRO prevented the establishment of permanent structures in Cuyab," said lawyer Elsie Mercado.

Mercado, a counsel of the five-legal Sumatran Group, represents the 89 farmer beneficiaries.

"Besides, upon hearing of the dispute between the Palo family and the Cuyab farmers, probably didn't want anything to do with the legal controversy. They decided to forego the electrification," Mercado told the Inquirer.

More than 10 years later, almost all of Cuyab has yet to enjoy basic utilities such as electricity, existing water and telephones.

Compounding the community's woes is Cuyab's access road that remains impassed. The farmers say produce would also have to be brought out through the Palo Caballeros Golf and Country Club or pass over the owner's public market.

The Department of Agrarian Reform's adjudicator, Noel Claudel in 1991 awarded certificates of land ownership to some 65 farmers who had been living in Cuyab since before World War II or their respective heirs under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

But the Palo family appealed the decision with the Court of Appeals which upheld Claudel's decision.

The Palo family insists on its ownership of the land, arguing that it is exempt from CARP because it is a watershed and is dispersed as 18-degree angle.

"Land above 18 percent slope cannot be titled. And yet you see farming the very property in your area?" SC Chief Justice Hilario Davide asked the estate's lawyers.

In December 1995, the Supreme Court granted the Palo estate's petition for review

BARANGAY Cuyab boasts pineapples, coffee, coconut and fruit trees but for the past decade has been denied electricity, running water and telephone because of a 5-year dispute with the Palo family.

and cordoned.

Three years later in 2001, the SC decided to remand the case back to the Cuyab.

"We couldn't believe the decision since the Palos didn't present any new evidence to support their claim to occupy the land from CARP" said farmer Cruza

ers Amante whose grandfather was among those who fled the Taal Volcano eruption in the 1900s and settled in Cuyab.

"Many of the farmers and their families have thought that the Supreme Court would finally uphold our claims since the Palos and the DA have said that the land was covered by CARP," Amante told the Inquirer.

The farmers filed a motion for reconsideration but the high court upheld its earlier decision. Meanwhile, the farmers filed a second motion for reconsideration which the SC is still studying whether or not to affirm.

Global warming caused landslides, says gov't exec

A CABINET official on Thursday blamed global warming for the series of landslides and floods that wrought death and destruction in the central and southern Philippines last month.

The disasters killed more than 100 people on the islands of Panaon, Leyte, Mindanao and Bohol shortly before Christmas.

Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun said that while the massive loss of forest cover and geologic factors were partly responsible, those areas affected had until December avoided landslides even though farmers had been clearing upland areas since 1920 for coconut and other cash crops.

Gozun said the new elements were the record heavy rains that fellon Panaon and the Surigao region in Mindanao.

"Our should, however, point out that this unusually heavy rain is one concrete manifestation of climate change," Gozun said.

"Indeed, weather patterns all over the world have been changing—brought about by man's excessive release of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane.

"This is supported by the fact that there are forest areas which were as carbon sinks and absorb the carbon dioxide," she said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson on Thursday said the government was providing incident and long-term solutions to the disaster areas.

"Now we're talking about relocating the homes to which the disaster victims will transfer to because the places from which they came are now hardly habitable," said Ignacio Bunye.

The government will build houses for some of the disaster victims on Panaon using bamboo and logs confiscated from illegal loggers, he said.

Bunye also said the government will engage in "massive reforestation" to deter a recurrence of the disaster.

He

Loren splits opposition

From page 00

earlier worked with another ex-senator, Juan Ponce Enrile, in an attempt to unite the opposition.

Both Tatad and Enrile have joined the KBL.

Tatad recalled what he called the "1992 experience."

"Initially, both Businessman Ed. tactic] funding campaign and "Erap" Estrada were running for president. But midway there was a change. Erap abandoned his presidential bid and agreed to be the vice-presidential candidate and running mate of Estrada. I don't know if that experience can be repeated, but I'm optimistic," he said.

"It has been a long wait for us, but we remain optimistic."

Measured praise

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. welcomed Pia's choice with measured praise.

Pimentel, who is running for reelection on Pia's Senate slate, admitted that Legarda enjoyed immense popularity.

But he quickly added: "Loren, I think, suffers from the same negative objectivity as Susi. Wala de [ang] ano ... particularly on the issue of the Power Purchasing Adjustment (PPA)."

He noted that both Legarda and de Castro, who rose to popularity as broadcast anchors of the giant ABS-CBN television network, were associated with the Lopez business empire, which owns the Manila Electric Co. De Castro, before known as Rahayan, became prominent in running Lopez businessman Eugenio Lopez's confidential for vice president.

But Legarda, when sought for comment, said: "I am not a stranger to the Epira law, which led to the imposition of the PPA, and I think that the PPA issue should be resolved in favor of the consumers."

The controversial Electric Power Industry Reform Act mandated the power business.

Loren's performance

Pimentel emphasized that Legarda had the edge over De Castro in terms of performance. He cited Legarda's authorship of several laws on environment conservation, child workers' rights, women empowerment, agricultural productivity among others.

De Castro is identified with only two laws—the Anti-Rape Law and a bail system in the courts.

"But performance has never been a decisive factor in the choice of candidates," Pimentel said. "She has to work hard to her own. Unfortunately, in the Senate does one seems to be a decisive criteria for the people to vote for a Senate performer."

By close urged Legarda to "build herself up."

"In other words, it's not a certainty that simply because she has been joined by PPJ, it will necessarily translate into an automatic victory for her."

Kalaayan supporters

The Kalaayan for Vice President Movement (KVPM) yesterday urged Legarda to reconsider her vice presidential draft and instead run for re-election in the Senate.

John Castlemayn, KVPM spokesperson, said the country needed Legarda's leadership and dynamism in the Senate, "which she could lead very soon as Senate President."

He added that KVPM would even help Legarda in her campaign for another six years in the Senate.

"We believe that Senator Loren should just consider serving as senator for another six years. She will top the Senate elections this May and she can be Senate President eventually," Castlemayn said in an interview. Legarda topped the Senate race in 1998.

"She is very young at 43 years of age. She need young and dynamic leaders in the Senate like her. We can even help her in her campaign," Castlemayn said.

"We disagree with Senator Pimentel's statement that even former Sen. Miriam Santiago can beat Rahayan. Senator Miriam, brilliant as she is, is a political has-been," Castlemayn observed.

"She has as a presidential candidate in 1992 and she also lost as senatorial candidate in 2001," he added.

Castlemayn said that De Castro could have made a successful run for the presidency had he not decided to accept the President's draft.

"We believe that he would be the country's next vice president," Castlemayn said. With a report from Norman Bordadora

SENATOR Legarda poses a la Fernando Poe Jr. as she holds up a "Save" ballot from the balloting during her to be his running mate in the May 10 presidential election. She formally accepted the invitation during a press conference at the Manila Polo Club in Makati City Thursday. EDD GUMBAN

Lim, Rasul, Herrera in 2 opposing slates

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conflict arose.

He holds a master's degree in business management from the Asian Institute of Management. He also attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Rasul was director of the Development Bank of the Philippines and co-founding director of the Land Governance Guarantee Corp.

He served as presidential adviser on youth affairs and chair of the National Youth Commission from 1994 to 1998 under Presidents Fidel Ramos.

Assured slots

An affiliate of the ruling Lakas-CMD party said Rasul and former Ms Cuneta, the daughter of the late Sen. Pinatao Cayetano, were among several names included in the administration's slate list.

Those already assured of slots in the slate are senior Senator "Nene" Pimentel, chair of the Metropolitan Mayors Board, and Mamapaug Gov. Lito Lapid, reelectionist Sen. Rafael Jaworski and Sen. Ramon Revilla, former Trade Secretary Mar Roxas, Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan and former Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado.

Gordon as wrap?

Lakas officials say Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon will also be included if he wants it. Gordon reportedly wanted to run for vice president. Presidential Adviser Ruhuran Alvarez, spokesperson of Lakas-CMD, is reportedly thinking of either running for the Senate or seeking a senior Cabinet position if the Macapagal-Arroyo administration wins a full term in 2004.

Cayetano, a 37-year-old lawyer and businesswoman, is a total political neophyte.

She has remained in a radio program she originally shared with her late father, floating from the tragic death of her young son in 2000 and her father last year. Cayetano took up the cause of helping put up funds for sick children and a foundation for those with kidney problems.

Her younger brother, Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano, said it was really Pia who took up their father's flair for public service.

But he said the death of Pia's son and later on that of their father pushed her to the background.

"But aside from my family good name, she has a solid academic background," Representative Cayetano said.

He said his sister graduated cum laude from the University of the Philippines, where she also obtained a law degree.

She worked in Wall Street but was persuaded by her father to return to the country to practice law. She spent eight years practicing law with the Castillo, Laman, Tantuico Law Offices.

Gina says no

A third woman candidate was actually considered for the Lakas senatorial slate.

But Gina de Venecia, wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., declined the opportunity.

"I've decided to be there for my husband and children. We have if you have two politicians in the family," said Gina, head of the Congressional Spouses Foundation.

The Speaker, who himself has formerly been the subject of mobility people and tomorrow, reportedly was the one who to enter the idea.

"I don't want to be accused of (having a) political dynasty," said Dr. Venecia, president of Lakas-CMD which is chaired by the President.

Hanoi

"Besides, she has been helping a lot as a private citizen," the Speaker said. He noted that his wife has put up 11 branches of "The Haven" for abused women and neglected children across the country, apart from building 17 buildings for them in Metro Manila and nearby regions.

Gina said one of her projects, "The Haven for Women", has helped in the rehabilitation of more than 6,000 abused women.

The forthcoming election has also been clouded by the world's failure so far to get North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program and Bush's unpopular decision to send 3,000 troops to Iraq.

In central Asia, a parliamentary election in December could highlight the real extent of democratic reform in Uzbekistan. Since deploying troops there in 2001 for the anti-terrorist operation in neighboring Afghanistan, the United States has been under pressure from international human rights groups to push President Islam Karimov to loosen his authoritarian grip.

Elsewhere in Eurasia, elections slated for June are supposed to crown a US-sponsored drive for stabilization after more than two decades of fighting.

Washington has backed tycoon President Mikheil Saakashvili—fueling the might of warlords and tribals from Lebanon linked to the old Taliban regime—as expected to stand.

"US strategy is centered on battling terrorist in office," said Viktor Fesdik of the Brussels-headed International Crisis Group.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, has a long and history of election violence. And, security will be high when it votes on a new director, but likely many voting systems to push its president.

Incumbent President Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the nation's founding leader, was swept to power as a pro-reform movement following just three years ago. But she has been criticized for leading the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, but done much to destabilize her government.

It has done little so far the economy, and organized to settle armed rape on persistent corruption.

Megawati is struggling to fend off a long of backbenchers for presidential hopefuls. They include the cold war General Wiranto, nationalist, type of her own opposite and even the daughter of the former dictator, Suharto, who was ousted in disgrace in 1998.

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also faces an uphill fight ahead of a May 10 election.

She's relied on military aid from Washington in order against the Muslim separatist and communist insurgency and has mapped nationalism by supporting America's wars on terror and Iraq.

She's blamed very coup attempts against her on support for Bush's Iraq invasion. The movie say president she made all amid "people power" protests in January 2001.

As Bush's faces a tial for contagion, one of his friends—another Bin idol. Fernando Poe Jr.—is running against her. Observers fear the election may degenerate into a popularity contest based on celebrity rather than issues.

In Malaysia, new Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is likely to call elections by the end of the year. The government is almost certain to win, but Mahathir's growing support among some indigenous Malays for an ultranationalist Muslim party Mayoral ethnic Chinese and Indian voters could turn away from Badawi's party. AP

Year of the Monkey will also be year of elections in Asia

BANGKOK, Thailand—Astrologers say 2004 is the Year of the Monkey, but it's also a year of elections in Asia.

Hundreds of millions will determine the shape of presidents, governments and parliaments in about a dozen countries amid corruption, deepening economies, the ballot box could be groundbreaking or mundane, tightly contested or predictable, orderly or chaotic and even downright violent.

"The question is whether these elections are going to contribute stability or instability," said Michael Defarlow of the Hong Kong Regent Consultancy. "I think we'll see the credibility dynamic year all through Asia."

In Japan, a poll for the parliament's upper house won't directly threaten Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. But it will test support for his splurging plans to fix the world's second largest economy.

Up for judgment will also be his unprecedented deployment of 1,000 non-combat troops to Iraq despite Japan's postwar pacifism. Koizumi stacked the Save Iraq by paying as a donor boosting his country's military ties, and bashing its war critics. The symbolic vote could worry some voters and anger regional neighbors conquered by Japan in World War II.

In India, the world's most populous democracy votes in April 20 Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee must name a date by 600 million people to vote.

He thinks nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party leads a 17-party government and has used a spate of state elections recently. The ruling alliance has weathered bloody rioting among Hindus and Muslims and is reconciling with Pakistan just two years after they stopped hands from nuclear war over ownership of divided Kashmir.

But as one flash point calms, another maybe about to flare.

A bitter tussle for Taiwan's presidency will be decided on March 20. At issue is the island's identity, it's an independent sovereign nation? Or should it one day unite with China after splitting away 54 years ago amid civil war?

President Chen Shui-bian wants a two-thirds Taiwanese constitution. And, on Thursday he pledged in an address with a referendum on whether the first will ask if missiles and whether China should stop pointing missiles at them.

This has infuriated Beijing and upset Washington. Both fear the referendum could lead to a separate vote on whether Taiwan should declare itself independent, formal independence from China.

Polls suggest Chen is running neck and neck against challenger Lien Chan of the mainstreaming Nationalist Party who says most Taiwanese don't want to antagonize China. But unexpectedly, Chen has said his campaign for another term is "a battle for Taiwan's soul" and the nation's democratic Party."

In South Korea, an April 15 parliamentary election will be a landmark test for President Roh Moo-hyun, whose administration is in disarray only 11 months after he took office.

Roh promised to fight graft but he's been swept up in scandals involving aides indicted on charges of soliciting illegal funds during his campaign.

Roh's popularity has plummeted from 70 percent to about 30 percent, and his Uri Party is expected to lose its majority in the 299-seat National Assembly.

The forthcoming election has also been clouded by the world's failure so far to get North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program and Roh's unpopular decision to send 3,000 troops to Iraq.

In central Asia, a parliamentary election in December could highlight the real extent of democratic reform in Uzbekistan. Since deploying troops there in 2001 for the anti-terrorist operation in neighboring Afghanistan, the United States has been under pressure from international human rights groups to push President Islam Karimov to loosen his authoritarian grip.

Elsewhere in Eurasia, elections slated for June are supposed to crown a US-sponsored drive for stabilization after more than two decades of fighting.

Washington has backed tycoon President Mikheil Saakashvili—fueling the might of warlords and tribals from Lebanon linked to the old Taliban regime—as expected to stand.

"US strategy is centered on battling terrorist in office," said Viktor Fesdik of the Brussels-headed International Crisis Group.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, has a long and history of election violence. And, security will be high when it votes on a new director, but likely many voting systems to push its president.

Incumbent President Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the nation's founding leader, was swept to power as a pro-reform movement following just three years ago. But she has been criticized for leading the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, but done much to destabilize her government.

It has done little so far the economy, and organized to settle armed rape on persistent corruption.

Megawati is struggling to fend off a long of backbenchers for presidential hopefuls. They include the cold war General Wiranto, nationalist, type of her own opposite and even the daughter of the former dictator, Suharto, who was ousted in disgrace in 1998.

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also faces an uphill fight ahead of a May 10 election.

She's relied on military aid from Washington in order against the Muslim separatist and communist insurgency and has mapped nationalism by supporting America's wars on terror and Iraq.

She's blamed very coup attempts against her on support for Bush's Iraq invasion. The movie say president she made all amid "people power" protests in January 2001.

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'Palace will become MTRCB'

From page 00

violent" and even ridicule the tourists show biz and backchatgrounds as well as the rented in-terests they are said to represent.

The President, Lacson said Senator Sen. Ferdi Biser are pitted against Sen. Panfilo Lacson, the popular Pro, reviewed in as "Da King," whether will be a four-corneled presidential contest in 2004.

The opposition camp this week, as they invited Legarda, is the less directly leader who fielded at the rolling Lakas Party to pursue her ambition for higher office, to be Poe's running mate. She accepted the offer yesterday.

If the Poe-Legarda team wins, "Malacañang itself will become the MTRCB," Magsalin said.

Lacson supporter Carter Ilep, Gilbert Remulla questioned the Poe-Legarda tandem's capability for higher office.

Least prepared

He said the two were the least prepared to take on the two highest positions in the land.

"You have a standard bearer who is ambivalent about running, to say the least," said Remulla, referring to Poe.

"You have a multi-faceted personality who is looking for an identity," he said of Legarda.

Remulla and Legarda were media colleagues at the ABS-CBN television before joining politics. Remulla was a reporter while Legarda was a newscaster.

Qualifications

Poe has been attacked for, among other things, being a high school drop-out; lacking experience in politics and administration; being an alleged dummy of his buddy, jailed ex-President Estrada; and for failing to note up with a credible campaign platform.

With her decision to jump to the opposition, Legarda, who was with the ranks of the pro-administration senators during the Senate impeachment trial, is viewed by some quarters as an intrigues.

Legarda's long association with the ABS-CBN television station has also intensified her with the politicians allied to the politically and economically influential Lopez family that owns the network.

Remulla contended, however, that the Poe-Legarda ticket was "on the surface ... a strong ticket."

"You have both the political experience and the machinery in the GMA (Ms Macapagal and Ang Lacson, who both have strong machineries," he said. Cecille Suñiga

Phone firms buck list-up of pre-paid subscribers

By Dil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE COUNTRY'S mobile phone providers are strongly resisting a move by Malacañang to force all pre-paid phone users to register in a bid to deter the use of cellular phones in crime, such as bombings, specifically kidnappings.

Subscribers of Philippine Chinese-Chamber of Commerce executive vice president Francisco Chua said President Macapagal-Arroyo was "all-out" for the mandatory registration of all pre-paid phone users.

Chua said the President agreed with the business sector and the Chinese-Filipino community that this would be a strong deterrent to kidnapping by making it difficult for criminals to use mobile phones in their nefarious activities, specifically kidnappings.

Chua said there was no reason the Philippines could not implement a cell phone registration system when other countries have adopted this system without a hitch.

There are more than 20 million cell phone users in the Philippines with 90 percent of them pre-paid subscribers.

Chua, however, said the tougher regulation is being vigorously opposed by lawyers of mobile providers, particularly of Smart Communications and Globe Telecom who argued that forcing buyers of pre-paid SIM packs to register would affect their sales and this area not a foolproof system to track down criminals.

"It might not be foolproof but at least it would make criminals think twice before using their phones in engaging in illegal activities," Chua said.

Chua also noted that mandatory registration would actually benefit mobile phone providers because it would force buyers to buy their units and SIM packs from authorized dealers.

Chua said the mandatory registration would also discourage cellular phone theft because mobile phone providers could block the electronic ID—the International Mobile Equipment Identification or IMEI—and render the phone unusable.

At present, only post-paid subscribers could have their units traced because they provide the operators with their personal information which makes it easier to establish the ownership of a stolen phone.

Cops don't believe RP 'jueteng'-free

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE COUNTRY'S top cop's declaration that the country was "jueteng free" has elicited disbelief even from his own men.

In his year-end report, Philippine National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. claimed that 76 of the 79 provincial police districts were now free of the illegal numbers game, as certified to by local governments, police officials and religious leaders.

A senior PNP official, however, said that although the figures were believable, Ebdane's anti-jueteng drive was a "hard act."

During a Dec. 22 media briefing to announce updates on the anti-jueteng campaign, Ebdane appeared to lose his cool after he asked if the PNP was indeed close to wooding out jueteng.

"We're doing it so what's the question now?" he had snapped. "What we are presenting to you are the data. Perhaps the best thing for you [media to monitor] when] it will] the local [and], may be in the provinces."

Several police officers were also puzzled as to why Ebdane "suddenly" made illegal gambling his top priority, 17 months after he assumed the top PNP position, according to a senior police official.

"He had all the time but how come he moved only now?" a police general asked.

Behind Ebdane's back, he said, several field commanders were questioning why the PNP chief was pressuring them to eliminate jueteng and other forms of illegal gambling in their jurisdictions when there were "more pressing matters" to deal with.

"I became even more perplexed when I saw that the anti-gambling campaign was on top of the list of our accomplishments for the year," the general said.

In the scanned report released in the media on Monday he said Ebdane should have removed on the PNP's police spatial intrusion, street crimes, drug trafficking, bank robberies, and other forms of criminality.

The source said Ebdane may have been "pushed" into the drive by the requested threat of PNP Director Eduardo Matta to do a "Church" (The source alluded to chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group).

The source did not elaborate but another senior police official backed this theory.

The second official, who is identified with Ifok Pueblo Lacson, claimed that Matillano had met with former Bicol bet Cesar Luis "Chavit" Singson and at least three other top PNP officers at the Manila Polo Club to "hook up something" against Ebdane.

Singson's ouster as national prosecutor in late 2000 when he admitted being a "big man" for Ilocos President Joseph Estrada in the collections of kickbacks from jueteng operations nationwide. The expose eventually led to Estrada's downfall.

The Manila Yacht Club story, the source claimed, took place at the height of the controversy over Ebdane's decision to reshuffle 22 officers, including Matillano, early last month.

Matillano denied the alleged meeting in an interview with the Inquirer earlier last month.

After the supposed meeting, Matillano went public and demanded Ebdane's resignation for alleged incompetence and corruption.

Ebdane responded by sacking him as CIDG chief, only to pluck him out of floating status the following day after President Macapagal-Arroyo intervened a move criticized by some as favoritism which makes it easier to establish the ownership of a stolen phone.

FBI: Nothing on 2 brothers linked to terror

THE US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has nothing on the two American brothers arrested in Surat, Gorita, last Dec. 13 on suspicion they were terrorists, but is investigating one of them.

Officials told The Associated Press on Tuesday the FBI was looking into whether one of the brothers, Michael Jay Hobbs, III, who had worked at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, had access to sensitive information, but no FBI agent in San Francisco, California, said there were no charges pending against him or his brother, James.

The two were arrested on suspicion of harboring the Muslim insurgency in the southern Philippines.

Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo had said at a news conference on Tuesday that James Hobbs had met with members of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, two groups loosely linked by US and Philippine officials to the al-Qaida terror network of Osama bin Laden.

Domingo said the two had arrived in the Philippines on tourist visas and had been under surveillance, but they also carried documents indicating that they were enlisting kids to build Muslim schools and mosques.

Philippine military intelligence reports said James Hobbs' local contacts had asked him for help in getting money from US-based Muslim groups, purportedly for helping Muslim communities in Mindanao.

Domingo had admitted that there was no evidence linking the men to any past or planned terrorist plots, but said James Hobbs had called for the overthrow of the United States government in statements to local authorities.

Michael Jay Hobbs had worked as a heating and air conditioning technician at Livermore outside San Francisco, California, for about 10 years until 2000, a laboratory spokesperson said. The lab does nuclear weapons research for the US government.

The brothers, handcuffed and wearing yellow "detainee" shirts, were present at the news conference. At one point, James Hobbs shouted: "These are all fabricated lies!" He told reporters he was in the Philippines as he took his pregnant wife, Hsiao-Hua, a Filipino citizen. AP

A. Rosales; 69

ALFONSO "Daeling" T. Rosales of Bataan, Bulacan, brother of Daily Tribune reporter Angel Rosales, died on Dec. 29, 2003 at the age of 69.

He is survived by his wife Erlinda; children Willy, Alex, Thelma, Allison, Louie and Rachelle; brothers Wigaldo, Jaime, Eddie, Edgar, Damian and Edmund; other sisters Celia, Lerma, Anita, Corazon, Amelita, Cita, Rimin-ang Bulacan, and other relatives.

His body lies at the family residence at 54 Brian L. Bocaue, Bulacan. Interment will take place on Jan. 3 at 3 p.m. at the Garden of Peace Memorial Park in Bulacan.

New Year's Eve revelry 'generally peaceful'

From page 01

New Year's Eve fireworks accident victims numbered 804 and 21 were injured from stray bullets, according to Bairoy. He said this was a 200 percent increase from such incidents nationwide for the same period last year.

Suffer the kids

Almost half of the New Year's Eve fireworks blast victims in Metro Manila were children, said health officials who visited Diet last 1986 causes recorded from Dec. 21, 2003 to Jan. 1 marked an 11-percent increase from the 116 cases in 2002, breaking the trend of decreasing injuries for the past two years.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said the only way to stop the bloody revelry was to ban fireworks.

"If we can't totally ban fireworks, we can't bring down the number from the current level. It looks like 500 is the minimum point," Dayrit said at a news conference yesterday.

"As long as you have fireworks sold legally, you will always have injuries ... It's a reality we have to live with," he said.

Deadliest

The deadliest incident linked to the New Year's Eve revelry was the fire that gutted a row of commercial establishments in Laoang City early Wednesday, after police said one set off by a firecracker began fooling a gasoline. The suicide-like firecracker hit a power line, then rebounded back to ignite a can of gasoline-drums displayed on sidewalk stalls.

The 36 people who were killed were trapped inside burning buildings. Authorities said the death toll could still rise as 22 people were still missing.

Chief Inspector Joseph Allos, the Quezon provincial fire marshal, said fire fighters were not even aware that there were people trapped inside the burning buildings.

"The fire spread so quickly that we received 100 frantic telephone calls from the burning buildings," he said.

No-info drive

Bairoy blamed the rise in firecracker-related injuries to the government's misinformation campaign against the dangers of pyrotechnics.

"There were no information campaigns victims of firecrackers. These campaigns were the reason for the low figures in 2002," he said.

In the run-up to New Year's Eve, the government urged the public to refrain from using and toss cans with firecrackers in newspapers can photos of hands missing fingers and other grisly injuries.

Guns muzzled

Even police officers faced scrutiny after eight were arrested last year for firing weapons in the air. This time, cops were put under gun muzzles so commanders could tell who broke the rules.

At least five people, including a resident of the Eastern Police District, were arrested for allegedly firing guns indiscriminately in the run-up to New Year. The policemen were later dismissed. Two of the five were security guards from Malabon.

Failed target

The Department of Health sought to bring down the number of firecracker-related injuries to less than half of the 116 cases in 2002 but failed to do so because of the accessibility of firecrackers and the low mobility of its Operation Iwas Paputok campaign unit.

The campaign, which involves more than 50 hospitals all over the country, uses advertisements in major networks but the ads last year were not shown until Dec. 26.

Dayrit said that local firecracker manufacturers have been cooperative and are selling the firecrackers piecemeal so that even children are able to buy them.

About 44 percent of the injured were children. The youngest, aged 10 months, suffered minor injuries from lighting sparklers in San Fernando, La Union.

'Complex'

Dayrit said that if the government cannot ban the sale of firecrackers, which he said sets a "complex" undertaking, it should focus on implementing safeguards that would make it safe to handle firecrackers.

The injuries reported on New Year's Eve itself, from 7 p.m. Dec. 31 to 7 a.m. Jan. 1 dropped 7 percent from 360 in 2002 to 336 last year. Two of those injured from stray bullets are in critical condition.

Of the 336 cases last year, 304 were due to firecrackers, 15 to stray bullets and nine to mortar. Limiting fireworks injuries. The oldest victim was a 82-year-old man who swallowed unexploded.

Metro Manila registered the highest number of incidents, with Manila accounting for 101 cases, Quezon City 75 and Valenzuela 27.

Lower count

The number of firecracker-related casualties dropped in Central and North Luzon in 2003, compared to the year before.

Reports from the police officers in Central Luzon, Davao, Cordillera and Caraga in Mindanao showed that at least 162 people were hurt in firecracker blasts and fires during New Year's Eve.

Fires were reported in the cities of Dagupan and Baguio and in Nueva Vizcaya. One person was reported hurt in the Baguio fire. A policeman was ordered dismissed by his superior after he fired his gun at Christmas.

Central Luzon police reported only 128 people hurt in firecracker blasts this year, compared to last year's 136 injured and one fatality.

The Visayas reported 147 injured. Most of them from stray bullets.

The people were injured in Oriental Samar City while one man was reported to have died in a gun attack and six people injured in the revelry in Catubig City. Reports from Dahlia Medina, PDR Northern Luzon Bureau chief in Baguio; Jaime Dela Cruz, Tobias Escosio, Lawrence Ballita Jr., Dindo Calayan and Ray Zandueta, PDR Northern Luzon Bureau; and Jennifer Rojas, Carmela Reyes and Allan Macatuno, PDR Central Luzon Desk

Two-year-old Ernesta Bautista grimaces in pain while doctors treated him at East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City. Bautista suffered an eye injury when he picked up unexploded firecracker in Lilo, Fairview. Erwin dela Cruz

Opposition boasts of 'powerhouse' slate

From page 04

team's lineup of Senate candidates as a "powerhouse."

"As when political analysts say about an 8-08 Legarda bandom. The crucial choice is into individuals," she said.

One of those on the list, opposition leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., a political veteran seeking his final Senate slate.

"The team, yesterday, has big names to the political scene whose qualifications were identified with deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Aside from Pimentel, the senatorial selection sessions were in the lineup: John Osmeña and Teresa Aquino-Oreta. The list also included Barry or members making a comeback bid: Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Freysinnet Tatad and Juan Ponce Enrile.

All of the candidates, except for Pimentel, supported Estrada during his impeachment trial in the Senate.

Not complete

But the other half of the 12-person ticket was not yet complete, with the opposition said to be choosing from about a dozen prospects.

Senators Edgardo Angara and Vicente Sotto III said it was possible that the lineup will not be ready by today when the list included Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, Tatad and Juan Ponce Enrile.

Angara and Sotto said that all told, the total number of members of the team is reached 19. They did not identify who the nominees were, but said the list included former Senate president and four returning senators.

But Angara confirmed that Senate Minority Leader Carlos Padilla, who is supporting the presidential bid of opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, was also a nominee.

Sources identified the other possible candidates as ex-senator Ernesto Maceda and Salonga Ordoñez, former Senate President Neptali Gonzales II and Trade Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan.

Also mentioned as possible candidates were Rep. Antonio Cuenco, Rep. Antonio Albacin, Rep. Isidro Rodriguez, Rep. Jesus Sacdalan, Rep. Ismael Mathay III, Rep. Jose Solis, Rep. Jose Carlos Lacson, Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, Rep. Eduardo Gullas, Rep. Eduardo Ermita, Rep. Jose Lina Jr.,

Pope calls for new int'l order based on UN goals

POPE John Paul II waves as he arrives at the altar to preside the Te Deum prayer at the St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City on Wednesday. AFP

[illegible] throughout its continuing conflicts around the globe. But he stressed that to bring about peace, there needs to be more respect for international law and the creation of a "new international order" based on the goals of the United Nations.

He called for "an order that is able to give adequate solutions to today's problems based on the dignity of the human being, on an ecological development of society, on solidarity among nations rich and poor, on the sharing of resources and the extraordinary wealth of scientific and technological progress."

Burundi murder

The pope mentioned continuing violence between Israel and Palestinians, and also offered his prayers for his ambassador to Burundi, Archbishop Michael Courtney, who was gunned down by assailants this week as he returned from a funeral.

John Paul said Courtney was killed "while he carried out his mission in favor of dialogue and reconciliation" in the central African country which has been wracked by violence for years.

"Let us join his family in hoping that his example and sacrifice will bring about the final victory in Burundi and this world," he said.

Earlier this month, John Paul created a formal diplomatic relationship with the Holy See of Peter in which he called for a reform of the United Nations and international law to deal with the ever-changing threat of terrorism.

He called a new framework for international law was the only way to achieve peace and guarantee against the arbitrary use of force. He didn't mention the United States by name, but his message appeared timed to the UN anti-terrorism campaign—and in particular at Washington's pre-emptive war in Iraq, which was launched without the specific authorization of the United Nations.

The pontiff, who is a vocal critic of the Iraq war, also has long warned the Washington and Baghdad to try to prevent hostilities from breaking out and exhausting world leaders that war would inevitably solve any "obvious difficulties humanity."

Iraq war critic

"Because peace is possible ... it is necessary," he said during his homily Thursday.

The New Year's Mass was the last major celebration of the Christmas season for John Paul, who is 83 and suffers from Parkinson's disease, which makes it difficult for him to speak, as well as have and buy schedules that make it almost impossible for him to walk or stand.

He cut back several of his holiday activities and scrapped two traditional papal events—the midnight Mass at Bethlehem, which is a target for terrorists, and baptisms on Jan. 11.

On Wednesday the pope called for world peace during a year-end Thanksgiving ceremony in Saint Peter's Basilica.

Tight security

"Many queue of peace, long are days of peace the city of Rome, for little for Europe and for the whole world," his 83 year-old pontiff said with marked difficulty due to the Parkinson's disease from which he suffers.

Tight security surrounded St Peter's in the service, during which the pontiff presented an exhaustive guide from books to a lighter weekend note the Christmas period, as recommended by his doctors.

This included crowding prevalent audiences on Christmas Eve and Mass Noel's Day.

Several thousand worshippers attended the traditional Te Deum at which Rome's mayor, on behalf of Roman citizens, gave a present to the pontiff as head of the Church and Bishop of Rome.

In his homily the pope expressed the wish that families and elders all young married couples should receive encouragement and that the family should continue to "correspond to God's project."

Tight security followed a reported warning by Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on Interior ties that there might be a suicide attack on the Mosque on Christmas Day.

"Several were the days in the Vatican in the face of such threats," said the apostolic penitentiary Ilarino Cardinalmenzio on television. "And the pope is always courageous."

Force of law

In a message two weeks ago he condemned use of force as a solo instrument against terrorism but expressed support for coercion against governments guilty of human rights abuses.

"International law must recognize that the law of the strongest does not prevail," the pope continued in his statement.

The pope said it was necessary for states to avoid the "temptation to appeal to the law of force rather than to the force of law."

"Democratic governments know well that the use of force against certain recent perils is a misuse also of the principles of the rule of law."

The fight against terrorism cannot be limited solely to repression and punitive operations, "the pope added.

He also recalled the United Nations charter, which "confirms the natural right to legitimate defense to be exercised in specific ways and in the context of the United Nations."

The UN Security Council had responsibility for collective security with "competence and responsibility for the preservation of peace, with power of decision and ample discretion." With reports from AP and AFP

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All hands on deck for pols running for office

YEAR of the monkey: Teenagers look at a Japanese red-faced monkey at the Manila Zoo in Wednesday.

[illegible] reads to scramble 'n keys as openings to boost the noisy powers."

Since the '90s, fortunes has been one of the most common persons regularly sought by TV shows and the print media for their New Year predictions, ring shot tips, astrological readings, or "visions." The curiosity from a weekly 888 radio program had to busy offers as a "life saviours" reader.

Cory's Labor sign

As to the famous labor or "I" sign made popular by then President Cory Aquino, dumbuhar responsible named that it symbolizes the great fortune's fortunes "finds and the Are above."

It centers being "unapprovable marketed—your feet appears to be on the ground but other people cannot seen to south you," she said. That there are three fingers pointing down, which also connotes "enormous personal efforts," she added.

Fluorite sp

Some words of caution to those who use the "Thumbs up" sign. It's a great favor of "attention, yes, but for what purpose? It can 'come with me whatever I want to take you'."

The "clenched fist" sign would mean that whoever uses it is "in the process of preparing to fight."

The raised open palm where "greeting wise" someone, "invokes higher blessings, which may be either positive or negative, depending on one's spiritual heritage."

The index till who pays utmost precision complex," she said.

Hitler's hand signal

Adolf Hitler adopted the hand sign as the Nazi party salute for "he knew very well what it means happiness," Imbalon explained.

This coming four of the Monkey, according to her, strongly has the characteristics expected of an intuitive year.

The monkey's "natural optimism will come out" in people, she said when asked for her political forecast.

Hidden talents

Hidden talents will finally be put to use when it comes to discovering and exploiting other people's revelations."

But then, she said, "nobody will really feel good or hurt by attacks left and right, for there will be a 'Wild Card' that will be used by Monkey to pervade neighbors or big-shots [illegible] will be revealed."

Jesus Lozano, astronomer, the four of the Monkey [illegible] which starts coming week must until Jan. 21 according to the Chinese calendar] is described as "a time of positive energies, creativity, and inner devotion rests on the solution of schemes."

Peanuts

"Everyone wants to work the clairvoyant magic, get the best deal, and win big. Also to the gullible or dull witted! Monkey will gleefully send all the pressure and loose working but empty shells," one listener warns in a record.

"There will be success even in unpossible scenarios, those will be victorious and improve in their jobs: Politicians, diplomats, high finance and business will be engaged in one big poker game with everyone trying to out bluff each other ... Monkey is one who can laugh off his mistakes and improve his bargaining prowess in the next round," according to a Chinese fortune librarian.

"This is a year that will find us still trying to get a better deal to outsmarting the other man. It is hard to keep track of who is winning, as the right hand has no idea of what the left hand is up to. One thing is sure: this will be an extremely progressive time. We will all dream elated, and even if we do not apply ourselves to the utmost, we will be carried forward by the inspiring fate of the Monkey's natural talent for learning and advancement," it added.

Election year

Not surprisingly the last Monkey year saw national elections being held in the Philippines. It was in 1992 when Fidel V. Ramos became President and Joseph Estrada was elected vice president.

Other "Monkey" milestones in Philippine history were at her pivotal or politically charged:

* The start of the revolution against Spain and execution of national hero Jose Rizal (1896).
* The UK female pirates [illegible] ing the grant of Philippine Independence, sponsored by Senators Harry Flowers and Bronson Cuenca (1932).
* Sen. Douglas MacArthur [illegible] his "I shall return" promise and liberated the country from the Japanese in WWII (1944).
* The Communist Party of the Philippines was founded (1968).
* Left-leaning labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno was organized (1969).

The University of the Philippines was also established in a Monkey year (1908), and so was martial [illegible] demonstrations led by UP law student Mercedes Vitenzo against "unwarranted provisions" in the appropriations act increasing the salaries of the members of the House of Representatives. With research by Jessica Adina

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A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!!

The WORLD

Edna Lucena B. Cuaso

5 killed in car bomb explosion in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—Five people were killed and two dozens wounded, including several Westerners, when a powerful car bomb ripped through a popular Baghdad restaurant packed with New Year's Eve revelers.

Witnesses said they saw several bodies in the vestibule of the Hamid restaurant in the upmarket Karrada district of Baghdad, which was patrolled by Polish troops. Thursday night's blast was the third within the clash ticked over to 2004.

Iraqi police lieutenant Amer Rashid said five people were killed, while Hamid Shwaffa, a doctor at the Kadhimiya hospital said three foreigners, an American and two Britons, were among the 24 wounded in the blast.

The deadly attack shattered Baghdad's quiet though tense calm and US security forces had bolstered security in front of most attacks over the New Year holiday as guerrillas pressed their campaign against the US-led occupation.

Among the wounded were three Los Angeles Times correspondents and four staff members of the newspaper's Baghdad bureau. The paper said none was seriously injured.

Flames and smoke spewed into the night sky, swallowing up cars car parked in the restaurant. Stores resulted as fire engines and police fired the scene, while several people wandered around in shock, with blood staining their clothes and faces.

"It was a van loaded with approximately 1,000 kg of explosives and artillery shells. It detonated at a restaurant in central Baghdad in the vicinity of 9:22 p.m.," a spokesperson for the US coalition said.

The Karrada district has been hit by two roadside bombs in the past four days that killed three Iraqis, two of them children.

US President George W. Bush, meanwhile, was to confer with close friend and special envoy James Baker at Bush's Texas ranch on New Year's Day. Baker recently made trips to Europe and Asia in search of coupons totaling some Iraq's $120 billion debt.

Wednesday's restaurant bombing in Baghdad was the deadliest attack since Dec. 27, when five Bulgarian soldiers and one Thai were killed along with 12 Iraqis in a multiple car bomb and mortar attack in the outskirts of Kut'aiba.

More than eight months after the fall of Baghdad, US troops are still battling an insurgency, despite the capture of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein on Dec. 13, and US forces said they had averted intelligence warnings of attacks in the run up to the Christmas and New Year holidays. AFP

MUSCOVITES celebrate New Year 2004 on Red Square in Moscow, early Jan. 1. —

Aftershocks jolt Iran quake town

BAM, Iran—Aftershocks jolted the ancient city of Bam on Thursday "like an underground train hitting a bad piece of track" as survivors of its devastating earthquake prepared to mass, enormous army of the estimated 30,000 who died.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was due to hold a memorial service on Thursday afternoon in Bam, 1,000 km southeast of Tehran, for those killed in Iran's worst natural disaster for at least 11 years.

"It felt like an underground train hitting a bad piece of track," one witness said after four aftershocks shook the eastern Silk Road city overnight following last Friday's quake.

Medics and the Iranian army said on Wednesday that at least four people, including an 88-year-old woman, had been pulled alive from the rubble in Bam in the last 48 hours.

But officials said the death toll from one of the worst disasters of recent decades may climb to 50,000 and more rescue teams have abandoned the search for more survivors.

UN officials said about 60,000 people were now left in Bam—most spending the bitterly cold nights in tents—out of an original population of 105,000. The remainder were either dead, missing, in hospital or had left town. Reuters

A PASSENGER walks near the world's first magnetic levitation train for commercial use, the Maglev, on Jan. 1 in Shanghai, China. The Maglev, which started its regular service Thursday, runs between Longyang Road Station and Pudong International Airport at a speed of 430 km an hour for about 7 minutes 20 seconds. —

2004 will be better than past year, Asian stargazers predict

BEIJING—After a tumultuous 2003, the world this year will free itself of major woes and the global economy will accelerate as a new cycle of good fortune is ushered in, astrologers across Asia predict.

Stargazers agree that the coming 12 months united fate much worse than the one-side that the world saw in 2003, dogged by war in Iraq, fluctuating financial markets and mysterious diseases.

"On the whole, 2004 will be better than 2003," said Hong Kong-based feng shui Master Siu Lai-sang, when asked about what the fate of the Monkey will bring.

"2004 will herald in a new fortune cycle. The global economy will continue to improve for the better with small enterprises expected to benefit most."

The political year is also expected to be a tie-caliber, exciting market.

"Although conflicts around the world will continue, like in Iraq, there will be no new major wars emerging. So the political situation is likely to see some stabilization in the year to come."

While astrologers' predictions are often dismissed as superstitious nonsense, millions of people swear by what stargaze say and Siu Hau, an astrologer from Shangrao in China's Hunan province, spoke to the same tongue as Siu.

No major wars

"I think there will be no major wars next year," said Yue, Siu named. "Cowtops people better watch out as many will be caught."

One of the major drivers of the world economy last year was emerging China and astrologers on the developing nation continue to be important drive.

"In the year of 2004, China's economic growth rate will be 7.4 percent to nine percent. In the months of March, May, July, September and November, robust economic growth will be witnessed," said Song Qigang, a mystic from Hunan in China's Shandong province.

"The industry of real estate will peak while the industry of textile and garment industries will be sluggish."

Yue from Hunan agreed: "I think economic development will speed up in China and more young people will join government service. The mining industry will also flourish next year."

Riches in mid-2004

Fortune tellers in India are teaming on Saturn to play a key role to boost the country's wealth.

Some however warn the tribes will come only after mid-2004.

"The current star combination is favorable for Saturn; it currently going on the opposite direction from the sun which is a negative factor," said Jugal Kishore Gower of Sanil is chief astrologer firm in New Delhi.

"Saturn represents the miners and leaders and when it travels slow it leads to disaster and earthquakes like the one in Iran and this will raise political tensions around the world.

"But come March-end, fortunes will look up on Jupiter, which represents knowledge, is well placed in the path of sun and that will remain there until July and then Mercury will bring riches on star business (considerably between August and October)," he said.

The astrologer cautioned however that the period until March 7 could be filled with tensions for India and the world. "Saturn delays but does not deny," he added.

Lalit Grover, China's feng from major disaster to your abroad.

"I predict a big fire disaster in 2004," he said, but, like Hong Kong's Ma, does not see a repeat of the deadly SARS virus that ravaged the world in 2003.

"SARS will not come back," he said. AFP

Shanghai maglev train begins regular runs

SHANGHAI—Sleek, silvery and ready to fly, Shanghai's 430 kph magnetic levitation train began its daily commercial operation Thursday shooting out of its station amid high hopes for better—and much more expensive—commuting.

The opening came a year and a day after German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder visited Shanghai for the maiden voyage of the German-built project.

The first train Thursday pulled out at 8:52 a.m. from Longyang Station with 30 passengers aboard for the 7 minute, 20-second ahead of a journey—20 kilometers to Pudong International Airport.

The price of tickets to see it about 50, and VIP seats cost about $35. Trains will run every 20 minutes daily.

Security guards stood by at the entrances. Passengers were required to go through security-check security to board. Digital signs monitored the speed for passengers.

Based on German technology, the $1.2 billion train connects Shanghai to its 6 km-old airport, the city's second.

The system underwent nearly a year of testing since it made its inaugural experimental run on Dec. 31, 2002, carrying fellowriders and former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji. More than 200,000 people have ridden the train in test-and-see runs since then.

German engineers spent decades and billions of dollars developing magnetic technology, but had searched in vain for a customer until Shanghai said on yielded the system as a way to high, lighter the city's high-tech ambitions. AP

Police dismiss Michael Jackson's abuse claims

SANTA BARBARA, Calif.—The Santa Barbara County Sheriff on Wednesday dismissed claims by Michael Jackson that he was roughed up by deputies during his arrest on child molestation charges and threatened to charge the pop star with making a false police report.

Sheriff Jim Anderson, speaking to reporters at a news conference to refute Jackson's claims, also showed a videotape of the 45-year-old entertainer being taken into custody inside an airport hangar and excerpts of an audiotape made during his subsequent ride to a police station.

On the audiotape, Jackson initially tells deputies that his handcuffs were "a little tight," but never accuses them that he is "wonderful, thank you" and can be heard whistling, singing and humming during the ride.

The deputies can be heard asking Jackson several times if he was comfortable and advising the star—"King of Pop" however to be the car seat to avoid discomfort from the handcuffs.

The videotape shows Jackson stepping off his private plane with his parents Mark Geragos and having a discussion with authorities before he is placed into the car.

"Michael Jackson was treated with the utmost respect and courtesy during his arrest, transport and booking and release by officers from [the department]," Anderson said. "He was never manhandled or abused."

He later added: "I think Mr. Jackson has seriously hurt his credibility" Anderson said that as the cops Jackson can be heard as he leaves the jail thanking one of the detectives who escorted him there and can be seen waving to the crowd with the arm that he said was injured.

"I am accepting the apparently serious allegations made by Mr. Jackson as a formal citizen complaint against members of the Santa Barbara sheriff's department," Anderson said, adding that he had asked for the complaint to be "thoroughly and completely" investigated by the state attorney general.

California Attorney General Bill Lockyer said that at Anderson's request, he had asked investigators to follow up on Jackson's and whether the entertainer's civil rights had been violated. Reuters

MICHAEL Jackson displays his right arm in this undated photo released by the office of attorney Mark Geragos. Jackson said on Dec. 28 that he was bruised and his shoulder dislocated because of police rough treatment. —

Israeli dog joins up with Palestinians

JERUSALEM—An Israeli army Alsatian trained for fighting was shot dead during an operation in the West Bank city of Nablus after turning on one of the soldiers, the Maariv daily reported Thursday.

Israeli clashes with Palestinian militants Wednesday in the narrow streets of the Old City the German shepherd named Sirc and shortly wounded and bit one of the Israeli paratroopers, the newspaper said.

The soldier shot the dog in the leg but, he changed a second time and was eventually shot dead by another soldier. AFP

KOIZUMI (left) is led by a Shinto priest during a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo honoring Japan's war dead on Jan. 1. AFP

Koizumi visits controversial shrine again, draws swift rebuke from China

TOKYO—Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi started the new year by visiting a shrine honoring Japan's war dead Thursday—a decision that brought a swift rebuke from China and could provoke an uproar over Tokyo's biggest planned deployment of troops abroad since World War II.

Koizumi's annual visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, often criticized as a tribute to Japan's militaristic past, outrage countries in Asia that Japan invaded and brutally occupied last century.

This year's visit comes at a particularly touchy time as Japan embarks on a sensitive mission to send military personnel to assist humanitarian efforts in the US-led reconstruction of Iraq. The visit also took Japan's relations with other countries, including China and South Korea, amid an ongoing diplomatic drive to prod North Korea to end its Japanese-run its nuclear programs.

Koizumi arrived amid a throng of New Year's revelers, dressed in the long robes and pleated trousers of a traditional, formal Japanese costume. Koizumi climbed the steps of Yasukuni shrine led by a white-robed Shinto priest.

Koizumi, who is known for hundreds views and his support of policy to bolster Japan's military, said he had decided on the visit to pray for peace.

"I went with various feelings, including wishes for Japan's peace and prosperity," Koizumi told reporters after his visit. "Japan does not rest solely upon the efforts of people living now. Japan stands upon the sacrifices of others in the past."

Yasukuni shrine honors about 2.5 million Japanese war dead, including executed criminals such as war-era Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. It was Koizumi's fourth visit there since he became prime minister in April 2001, and his first since January last year.

China expressed strong dissatisfaction over the visit almost immediately.

Guang Jingxuan, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo, urged Japan "to stop further activities harming the feeling of the Chinese people and Sino-Japanese relations," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The emperor visit on New Year's Day was widely viewed as an appeal to conservative sentiment at a time when Koizumi finds himself before a public deeply divided about the military dispatch to Iraq, and hamstrung by criticism that he is rashly placing Japanese lives at risk.

"This trip was directed domestically," said Hisashi Ide, professor of political science in Kinanic University near Tokyo. "Shrine visits are a Japanese tradition. Koizumi is appealing to those sentiments. If you think about the timing, it comes right before the troops go to Iraq. I think it was calculated."

Though countries in Asia have not loudly protested Japan's decision to send its military to help with reconstruction in Iraq, the timing of this year's visit could be seen by other nations as part of a broader plan to remilitarize. Tokyo plans to send about 1,000 non-combat military personnel to Iraq to repair war-shattered infrastructure in southern Iraq shortly. AP

UK spy chiefs feared US would invade Saudi Arabia, Kuwait in 1973

LONDON—British spy chiefs secretly warned that the United States would be prepared to invade Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to seize their oilfields following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, it was declassified Thursday.

Files released to the British National Archives under the 30-year rule for classified documents show the intelligence agencies believed the US was ready to take military action to prevent further disruptions to oil supplies.

In followed the decision in December 1973 by the Arab nations to slash oil production, and send prices rocketing, while imposing a complete embargo on the Americans over their support for Israel.

In Britain, Prime Minister Edward Heath's Conservative government, which adopted a more pro-Arab line, was forced to draw up plans for possible rationing of motor petrol, having had to interrupt oil-fired industry.

Although the war in the Middle East was over after three weeks, a secret assessment drawn up by government ministers by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)—including the heads of MI5 and MI6—concluded the US would rather risk military action than be held to ransom again by the Arabs.

The report, dated Dec. 13, 1973 and marked "UK Eyes Alpha," described the seizure of the oil-producing areas in the region as "the possibility uppermost in American thinking."

The JIC calculated the US could guarantee sufficient oil supplies for themselves and their allies by taking the oilfields in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Gulf state of Abu Dhabi, with total reserves of more than 20 billion tons.

It assessed the American troops

that would need to last 10 years, as the West developed alternative energy sources, and would result in the "total alienation" of the Arabs and much of the rest of the Third World, as well as "Islamic dissidence" in the United States.

However, it said the Republican administration of President Richard Nixon could be prepared to take the risks, if it was faced with the "dark scenario" of renewed Arab-Israeli conflict and further protracted oil restrictions.

It said that the United States would even consider preemptive strikes if Arab governments, "claimed by the success of the oil weapon," began imposing new demands.

"Even if this had not happened, the US government might consider that it could not tolerate a situation in which the US and its allies were in effect at the mercy of a small group of unreasonable countries," it said.

"In view of the incalculable consequences of military action against the Arabs, we consider that US intervention would probably carry less serious short-term risk," it said.

"But we cannot rule out the possibility of a rather earlier intervention," it added.

The JIC said that the initial US mission force would not have to be large, with two brigades to seize the Saudi oilfields and one brigade each to take Kuwait and Abu Dhabi.

In order to maximize the element of surprise, the intelligence agency chiefs would probably be an airborne assault, but if that proved impracticable then could send an amphibious task force.

"For Saudi Arabia, the operation could be fairly straightforward. The preservice garrison of Dhahran is one lightly-armed National Guard battalion and a Saudi SAM battery," it said. AFP

Bomb explodes at music concert in Aceh; 9 killed

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—Nine people were killed and 52 injured after a powerful bomb ripped through a New Year's Eve music concert in Indonesia's restive northern Aceh province, the military said Thursday.

The powerful bomb destroyed the stage where the concert was being held at Peureulak in East Aceh, military spokesperson Lt. Col. Ahmad Yani Basuki said.

A 5-year-old baby girl and a 7-year-old boy were among the dead, Basuki said, immediately blaming the attack on rebels of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which has been fighting for independence since 1976.

"The explosion took place at 10:20 p.m. It was very powerful," Basuki said. He said most of the dead victims were teenagers.

A witness at the scene, who gave his name as Ahmad, said the stage erected on a football field was badly damaged and musical instruments blown apart.

"After several songs, suddenly there was a loud bang. People panicked and ran," he said.

A local rebel commander, Ishak Daud, denied GAM was behind the attack.

"We have never targeted civilians because they are our people," Daud said.

"The show was organized by the military and it was they who lured people to Arabic. The military must be responsible for the death of civilians," he said.

A police officer in Langsa, the main town in East Aceh, said about 100 stairway for rebels believed to have carried out the attack.

"The attack is suspicious. There's no question that this was carried out by GAM," he said.

Also on Wednesday, soldiers killed three rebels in separate clashes, Basuki said. Troops seized a Kalashnikov rifle, scores of rounds of ammunition and other rebel equipment, he said.

Aceh, which is rich in natural resources, has suffered under a decades-old conflict that included a brief 29-year crackdown launched by former Indonesian President Suharto in 1989.

Suharto's resignation in 1998 paved the way toward moves for greater autonomy for the province, and hopes of a lasting peace were raised by the signing of a pact in Geneva in December 2002.

The pact soon ran into trouble, however, with Jakarta placing under martial law on May 19 last year and launching an all-out military offensive to crush the separatist movement.

The military says 2,000 suspected rebels have been arrested or surrendered during the campaign and some 1,200 have been killed.

Some analysts question whether the will for rebel-led atrocities clashes continue, pointing out that relatively few weapons have been captured. AFP

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SPORTS

Pacquiao title clash with Marquez off

PACQUIAO: Early bout with Marquez highly risky, says we-trainer Freddie Roach

By Edwin L. Lagumbay

THE PLANNED mammoth confrontation between universal featherweight champ Manny Pacquiao and WBA/IBF featherweight king Juan Manuel Marquez will not push through after all.

The bosses backed from the camp of Marquez yesterday thus the Mexican became an Ghostbuster [Dynamite] has just received a tender from Top Rank more than 10 times the $1 million offer Pacquiao and Marquez will split in March.

Pacquiao's American trainer Freddie Roach backtracked the Filipino's planned rich duel with Marquez, saying it was a high-risk, low-return proposition for the conqueror of interim featherweight great Marco Antonio Barrera.

Roach said Pacquiao can easily win at least $3.5 million fighting either Puerto Rican Orlando Salido, who are not in the cal-

ibers of Marquez.

His disenchantment over the way Pacquiao's career was being handled by his US agent Murad Muhammad was one of the reasons Roach cited when he resigned as the Filipino's trainer the other day.

Roach said he was not also rightfully compensated as trainer of Pacquiao in the Fil-ipino's last four fights in the US.

Aberjos, a 25-year-old southpaw nicknamed "The Conqueror," boasts of a 33-1-1 record with 22 KOs. He has been on a 13-fight unbeaten streak since 2000. He is ranked WBC No. 1, WBC No. 4 and WBA No. 9 in his weight.

Marquez owns a record of 42-3, with 33 KOs. He outlived the WBA and IBF titles with a 7th round technical decision win over Derrick Gainer last June 1.

Gamboa seeks WBC junior fly crown Jan. 10

CEBU (27) — Ex-WBA minimumweight champ Jesus Gamboa will try to renew the lateral Boxing Council junior flyweight crown when he fights Jorge "Travieso" Arce on Jan. 10 in Tijuana, Mexico.

The Libas, Cebu-based Gamboa, ranked WBC No. 1 and WBA No. 13, left yesterday for Mexico along with trainer Ramon Abba Loot a Lakbayan Akiwood Rigby. They will be met in Tijuana by Gamboa's Japanese manager Jun Kitamori.

The 12-round fight is scheduled at the Centro de Espectaculos del Tijuard con el Adam's con in Tijuana, which is some 2,200 meters above sea level.

"I know the odds will be stacked against me, but I will do everything I can in the toughest fight of my career," Gamboa said yesterday.

Former Mideast athlete Gen Gamboa (20-7-2, 22 KOs) will be facing a durable opponent in new (34-8-1, 25 KOs), who is called Travieso (Naughty) by the Mexican boxing press.

He said Gamboa had less than two months of preparation for the title fight at the world-class ALA Gym of boxing patron Jose Aldeguer.

"He had spar-ted about 70 rounds against some supposedly boxers in the ALA Gym. Para reading ko: we can still win the matchings," Aldeza said, noting Mexico's high altitude and arid. Jun suppose will be considerable assets for the weigh-Arce. — Sabino L. Lagumbay, correspondent

UAAP stars shine in SEA Games campaign

PABLACIO

YAP

BONIFACIO

THE UAAP stars shine in SEA Games campaign

ABC-5 gets PBA TV rights for P100M

Network's 'realistic' offer does it

By Jane Navarro

TELEVISION network ABC-5 has secured exclusive coverage of the Philippine Basketball Association games for two years.

Owned by former PCSO top boss Sandoval Cosangay, ABC-5 beat MBC-4, Jesuits Broadcasting and Solar Sports after pegging what a reliable source said was a more "realistic" offer, which includes P100 million-per-season payments for TV coverage rights.

The new partnership becomes effective, however, only after ABC-5 presents a contract for renewing the league of its financial entitlement.

The network's proposal, presented by ABC-5 representative Bobby Barrera, got the nod of the PBA board's trustees giving the league the assurance of a solid presence, the same source added.

ABC-5, which is reportedly outbacking on a massive drive to boost its ratings with GMA-7, plans to broadcast the first games of the PBA on Wednesdays and Fridays on a delayed basis while basic games on Sundays will be telecast live.

"Only the second game on Wednesdays and Fridays will be aired live. The network's rivals in all these platforms would either be shown live at night or the following day" said the source added.

The PBA is expected to have a second ABC-5 in television expertise during the annual Rookie Draft on Dec. 16 at the Glorietta backup Dome in Makati.

Meanwhile, San Miguel Beer has offered its franchise player Danny Ildefonso a lucrative monthly paycheck of P500,000 for the next two to three years.

A San Miguel insider said that Ildefonso, back-to-back MVP in 1999 and 2000, would be the last one to go, dismissing speculations that the 6-foot-5 shotman is on the trading block.

C. de Oro pug dies 3 days after KO loss

By Solven L. Lagumbay

CEBU CITY — Cagayan de Oro City boxer Jerry Allan Jumawi died yesterday at the Cebu Doctors' Hospital here three days after he was knocked out in Tagum City by ALA Ilen Boxing Gym.

Jumawi was declared dead at 1 a.m. on New Year's Day. He left behind a 2-year-old son, Brent Kimm, and wife Brenda.

Jumawi was knocked out in the fourth round of a scheduled 8-rounder. Sunday. He was immediately brought to a hospital when he failed to respond to first aid and then was transferred to the Cebu Doctors' Hospital, where he underwent surgery to remove blood clots in his brain.

Emmanuel Asuncion, John Amores's father, said the body would be brought to Cagayan de Oro late tonight on board a WSA ship. GMA representative Vic Colmenares, who accompanied the remains of the body from the pier to the Sorsogon Provincial Police in Cagayan, was to meet them at the pier this morning.

Before leaving last night, Emmanuel Asuncion asked for a copy of the tape of the fight from spokesman Tony Aldeguer, manager of Parañas. Aldeguer said he would show it to his relatives in Aloguinsan before that he was cautious in assisting his boxer-son.

"This tape will prove to them that nobody was to be blamed, and the fight was not rain-called. It was an accident," Emmanuel said.

Emmanuel also asked from Aldeguer a set of ALA shirts, which is considered priceless in the boxing circle here.

"My son really wanted to smile as he came on ALA Boy. He always looked forward to wearing them," Emmanuel remembered.

Meanwhile, promoter Sammy "Ilen King" Bello said wants to install John Amara's wife, Brenda, as an employee of their company in Cagayan de Oro City to help her support Baby Kimm.

Brenda is currently a waitress at Ilen Resto-supermarket.

Guimaras plays host to national triathlon tilt

TRIATHLON, one of the fastest-growing adventure and Olympic sports in the country, finds a new venue when the island province of Guimaras in the Visayas plays the National Triathlon Championships on Feb. 1.

"We welcome the opportunity to host for the first time this event in our province and it is a very good way to promote the natural attractions of Guimaras through sports tourism and the big national triathlon championships, to be held simultaneously with the 5th national inter-club competition," said Guimaras Gov. Rahmon Nava, who has thrown his full support behind the project.

Triathlon president Tom Carrasco said holding major triathlon events in different provinces is the way of promoting the sport.

"We are happy that we have found another new venue. This is the first time that we are holding the national triathlon championship separate from the Palarong Pambansa. Triathlon as part of the elimination are conducted in our schedule," said Carrasco, who, in the past, has held the interclub competition in Dumaguete, Cebu and Iloilo.

The 2004 Guimaras National Triathlon Championship and Interclub Competition will start at the Bayanan beach resort in Nueva Valencia and will end at the provincial capitol in Jordan, Guimaras.

The event features the standard distance of 1.5K swim, 40K bike, 10K run while the sprint distance for junior triathletes is 750 swim, 20K bike, 5K run.

Sunkist-UST finds a new deadly hand

NOBODY paid attention to Sunkist-UST at the start of the PBL Plaridaura Cup.

Now coaches are having a hard time figuring out how to stop the Tigers from growling and creating havoc on their qualifying assignments.

[BMEL Vizcarra (left) tries to elude Rooster's C.J. Tio in a UAAP game last October. The uplifted Sunkist-UST switcher has become one of the hosts of the PBL.

Credit for the Tigers' amazing transformation from a mediocre team to a bonafide squad go to their newfound confidence and to a player with the hottest pair of hands right now—Jimbal Vizcarra.

The 6-foot-2 shooting fanatic is slowly and surely making a name for himself, even crowning more league than some established players who are about to join the pro ranks.

In his team's unmatched 89-82 win over league leading and defending champion Welcoat Paints last Jan. 22, Vizcarra banged in 23 points, including back-to-back triples in the waning moments of the game that spelled the difference.

"Tuwing lang po yun. Maganda na lang ang shots ng mga teammates ko eh, nagpapasok rin ang mga ito for 17 ang kulit. My teammates played well and perhaps it rubbed off on me," Vizcarra humbly said.

Pure hard! Certainly not.

It was the second straight time that he made insane clutch points. Just three days before, he defended his Samboy Foremost 3-3 championship this year.

The 27-year-old lead driver of Shell Helix Klaritz racing team said the expected participation of team foreign drivers Yan Chiou, Hong Kong and Australia will provide more glitter and spice to the competition.

"Some foreign drivers will be coming in with faster cars," he said. "We own the races with the longest."

Klaritz ruled this year's AF3 series by registering one-two finishes and five second-place finishes in the 12 races held in Subic Bay and Batangas race tracks in the Philippines, at the Sepang Circuit in Petaling, Thailand, at the Autopolis track in Japan and in Beijing, China.

As early as the 11th race in Batangas, Marave could be improving performance in his team of mechanics and to Shell Helix, the lubricant that kept his Toyota engine running flawlessly throughout the season.

"My mechanics delivered when it mattered most," he said, recalling several times when he almost didn't make it to the starting line due to some last-minute glitches. "I really thank them and Shell Helix for being there. I could never have won any race without their help."

Marave is often considered the Philippines' version of Michael Schumacher, the six-time Formula 1 champion whose sponsors—Shell and Pilot—he shares. Eddie Schumacher, however, likewise doesn't have a company like Ferrari to design and maintain his car. They're on their own when it comes to repowering the Dolera 300 race car that Marave drives.

In fact the new challenge for them now is how to make the old car faster to keep up with the foreign drivers' cars.

"The foreign drivers will definitely have newer cars, race series (more trials) and more high-tech," he said. "We need to make some modifications or use our ace to raise its quality to their level."

Marave got a taste of things to come in the last two races of this year's series.

Australian Christian Nieto, son of 2000 Formula 1 World Champion Alan Jones, joined the field in a guest entry but was slow in practice sessions. But Jones showed his true worth in the actual races and rocketed up the ranking.

Despite the tougher competition next year, Shell Helix marketing manager Edwin Lacsi remains optimistic of Marave's and Shell Helix-Klaritz racers' chances of remaining the title.

"The team is now more experienced. We believe in Pepsi's leadership and we are already doing things right in 2004," Lacsi said.

MARAVE celebrates after winning the Asian Formula 3 crown.

Marave has the title in the bag by posting a comfortable lead over former champion Mark Goddard of Great Britain.

Marave credited his improved performance to his team of mechanics and to Shell Helix, the lubricant that kept his Toyota engine running flawlessly throughout the season.

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SPORTSWATCH

Tourney to select Milo chess team to US set tomorrow

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Cannibal revolution

It is easy to see the Inquisitor special report series by Jean U. Sarmiento on the bloody purges of the Communist Party in the 1980s as another case of the revisionist skewering its own children. This is a deterministic view. The polarization that happened then, fostered on the one hand by a newly restored democratic government that sought to reassert democracy and turn back the gains of the communist insurgency by a military purge, and on the other, by a communist movement that was trying to recover lost ground after winning the boat in the Edsa Revolution, appeared to have spawned a paranoia in the underground leadership that unleashed the wave of purges that continued even to the '90s.

The paranoia in fact might have been germane to the communist revolution that is a utopian enterprise. The bright dream of utopia seems to breed the utter nightmare of paranoia. Rabid idealism instills the manic fear that the movement is being undermined from within. Cracks in the air become terrifying apertures in the heavens.

But as we've said, this is a deterministic, even benign view. It basically absolves the communist leadership of real guilt by it's like the temporary insanity defense.

Despite upholding an ideology that purports to explain the world to a materialist and scientific fashion, the communist leadership has not come up with anything remotely scientific to explain the bloody purges. It has basically responded to the issue either with silence or denial, either way a most unclinical, unscientific approach.

Ah, but it has acted quite scientifically and deliberately in pinning the blame on others. In what should be a classic case of splintering, aboveground organizations connected with the communist movement launched a campaign at the height of the purges to press the government to release information about the so-called "disappeared"—leftist activists who had suddenly disappeared from public view allegedly because of military and police illegal detentions or summary executions. But as the Inquisitor special series shows, the campaign merely led bits of the victims on a wild goose chase, and camouflaged the truth about the disappearances: the widening killing fields of communist purges.

The spin-doctoring continues up to now. Even in Dutch-sponsored forums on human rights in Manila, open and intelligent discussion about the purges is anathema. Communist groups have been quick to brand such discussions as reactionary, as anti-revolutionary discourses. They will brook no criticism, much less an honest, intelligent discussion. All provocations at distortion and science are thrown to the wind.

But the bloody purges cannot be dismissed. The huge number of killing fields and the high number of those missing are not statistics that can easily be manipulated or wished away. In the end, they ought to be confronted by the communist leadership.

The continued silence, evasion and worse, disinformation and revisionism by the communists bosses will merely mean two things: first, that purges and executions are the way of life in a movement that purports to be enlightened and "scientific"; and second, that the communist-owned executions of former members will only foster the notion of grace—such as Horacio Morales, Popoy Lagman and Hector Makilan/gan—had been profligated early on by the arbitrary killings of cadres and other members whose only sin was to invite the merest suspicion about their loyalty. In deed, the revolution devours its own children.

Leftist fascism

How do victims of the communist purges get justice? Against the oft-repeated claims of communist bosses that human-rights violations are inherently state commissions and not therefore, are to be blamed on state-occasions, there has emerged the belief that non-state armed groups should be made equally culpable for violence. For instance, Sidney Jones, director for Asia of Geneva Call, said that the purges were yet another argument that "non-state actors" should be made accountable for their abuses.

If the NPA, the CPP and the NDF insist on being treated as an equal of the Philippine government, in fact as the "other" government with powers to exact taxes and tariffs (they're insisting on collecting "permit-to-campaign" fees from candidates in the 2004 election), then they should submit themselves as well to the investigation and prosecution of their alleged abuses and excesses. Their refusal to do so would only mean one thing: that their vision of egalitarianism and communism is something exclusive to their self-interest, and not inherent in the rest of humanity.

Is Roco scraping the bottom of the barrel?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

TRUE to form, former Sen. Raul Roco is pushing the less prepared among the presidential candidates. He recently has the reporters, the educators—and probably the know-how, if not the wherewithals, for the job. No doubt about, he sees high in the poll surveys, being the earliest bird among the remembered, unfortunately, he can't seem to get the right combination for his wares. The names announced for his senatorial ticket gives the impression that he is already scraping the bottom of the barrel. But what is this, his choice for vice-presidential running mate looks like he has punched a hole in the bottom and is reaching below it. Which people would he choose if there is serious choice to make.

His candidate for vice president is former Sec. Fermin Aquino. Who he? Outside of his home province of Bataa, who knows him? He only claim to fame is that he was the assistant secretary of Ninoy Aquino. But experience has shown that intelligence is not transferable in blood relations. Look at Sen. Tessie Aquino Oreta, Congressman Dan and Stephen Aquino, and Kris Aquino, siblings and children of Ninoy.

The impression is that Roco can't find anybody else in here, former Aquino himself said he was surprised that he was chosen, and that he was only forced to accept the draft.

Senator President Pro tempore Orlino cited he would name Roco as will looking for a running mate, then Aquino would be replaced if he finds the right one. In short, Aquino is just a "pamasak lamay," a temporary candidate who can be replaced any time. Under any election laws, do you know that up to the eve of the election is left, a period of only two days—to substitute?

But why can't he find credible candidates when there are so many who have formally declared that they are running for the vice-presidency? There are, for example, Claro Recto's favourite of the Metro Manila Development Authority, Sec. Robert Barbers, and Senator Penafrancia Tolledo, among others. They're variously more credible VP candidates than Aquino. Why not them? A different party affiliation has never prevented politicians from jumping from one political party to another.

The answer can only be that those others believe that the coalition of those dubious political parties on which Roco belongs doesn't have a chance in this year's elections. After all, they are political parties in name only. Aside from one or two leaders, these parties have practically no members. They're only a little better than the late Sen. Lorenzo Tañadeo's Ordinary Party which, according to a joke, has only one member: Tañadeo.

So why are Aquino and his senatorial team mates running? Because of a flaw in the human mind: every candidate believes, or hopes, he can only even if common sense shows that he can't. Super optimism instead. Even those who take their surveillance of candidates for president believe they can win. If they believe they have no chance, they wouldn't bother to run. If he? Why waste time and money for a hopeless case. Money? I believe that Aquino, according to a standard joke, "for the kind of it," or unless they want their two minutes of publicity which a filipino intellectual calls pain shorts.

But Roco is coasting high in the surveys. That means he can win. Even the surveys, however, of qualification is the only basis. But being popular in the surveys and maintaining that popularity to actual votes can and examined for a result, they are two different things. A candidate needs the machinery, or, if a political party (the closest we have to one for purposes, so per-sonals) wants to vote for the candidates and to provide watchers to see to it that he is not cheated. Does Roco have enough of these?

For instance, Roco's vice-presidential and senatorial slates will weigh him down. The choice is supposed to help enjoy the money and votes, the whole Roco slate will vote for his stoker, the voter herself will vote every votes from him. In the first place, his choice have disappointed many supporters. They supposed Roco's credible candidates. Instead, their disunity proposed the image of a "serak" voters.

Signing, Roco, as I see it, wouldn't make a good president since. But his team mates are proposing his chances for the job.

* * *

Best judge to the New Year's five resolutions. Do you know that nine of millions of **prose search of groceries/bus drivers** replied last New Year's Eve were not made in the Philippines at all but in China? The ridiculous of Roman Empire and the Americans were overflowing into "shasic in China" fireworks and other pyrotechnics. And Filipinos snapped them up because they're not only cheaper, they're also better made, lesser dud. Is packed and more spectacular, safer.

What's behind us as to these questions. By story conform to our regulations on the use and safety of pyrotechnics? Did our government even bother to check them? Did those importers pay the customs customs duties?

If the Chinese firecrackers manufacturers are smart, they would study the imported Chinese pyrotechnics and make **consignments safer and more attractive products.** The government should encourage them to do. Only, they should be testing methods are very, very primitive. If they don't improve, the imports will put them out of business.

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE:

Holiday man to mime: This is a holiday! Give me your money!

Mime: Don't making a big mistake. I'm a corporation.

Holiday man: In that case, give me back my money!

Again, unity

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiroz

I HAVE a most interesting ad in the business-ads Sunday. It was a full page one, which therefore would command considerable expense on the part of those who put it out, who identified themselves as "veterans Filipinos supporting many different associations." Love for their children and their country was what drove them to work abroad, they said, and the same love for their children and their country was what drove them to support the candidacy of Fernando Poe Jr. Their appeal was for Appellee Fernando Jr. and Fernando Poe Jr.—ASF and FPJ—to join forces to save the country.

Joining forces specifically means Fernando running as president and ASF agreeing to run as his vice president. The groups gave as their "FPJ has the goodwill of the people. They are him as a cinema Filipino who wants to unify and serve the people. He is not a traditional politician. He is a man of the masses." However, there is more than a grain of truth to the fear of many Filipinos that he will be manipulated by the "people with vested interests who now surround him." That reliance to the masses, preventing him "from unifying the people" by balancing.

Financial, on the other hand, "is the weakest, area of what competence and integrity should be in public service." The ad goes on to cite his testimonials, which are formidable. It concludes: "Together, ASF and FPJ are commander and are the best team to run the country." It is signed by the "Global Coalition of Friends, Supporters and Sympathizers of Some Fernando Montes."

I do not take serious umbrage that Fernando had a hand in drafting the testimonials. Because they makes him look good. He himself has already rejected plans for running for higher office, so there is no need to comment on his qualifications to do so. I am not ruling out the possibility that the ad was put out by total sympathizers of his running for VP who, people whom have met in the flight planes even if their heads are slightly narrowed from their shoulders, who found their hands carried money to buy a page from the beginning. But there is no

safety I've taken notice of it. What has drawn my attention as it are several commentators (here that I myself have heard or various gatherings over the last couple of weeks.

The first is that FPJ is surrounded by people who will manipulate him. That is a premise that has produced vastly different conclusions, enough to cause confusion in the ranks. For the hard-line ones the ad makes it a original in the empire, though explicitly does not necessarily make for virtue. If FPJ will just be used by others, why should anyone want him to run or sit, even as vice president? If vice president manipulates power in his own right, and as shown by GMA, can succeed to presidency if he dies, or happens to him. And to answer further by GMA, can close up a country if he, or she, has the wrong agenda. If FPJ will just be used by others, you'll just want him to stick to acting.

What some others think though is that although FPJ will be prey to the schemes of others, he will remain his own man. That is apparently so because he has a good learning curve. What can I say? I didn't know the presidency addressed on the job training. I am tempted to say FPJ himself will not live a manpower in his election if he hope the fellow will learn acting while at it, but he probably does, so go by the quality of his memory. But if you won't do that for other professions, why on earth will you do that for the presidency?

The second point is that FPJ is not a traditional politician. That was how Hon. Ramon Administrator himself the first time he ran, he wasn't a topic because he hadn't run for a position before. That is just nonsense. You can't be any kind of politician, traditional or modern, if you haven't been a politician to begin with. All that's saying is that opportunist is bliss. The point is having held elective office without having failed to re-compromise and whatever dealing. That is what a non-traditional politician means. A first-time candidate to see a wage only in the sense that a clinging commercial to a toothpaste show to see a pasta doing upon dirty.

The third, and most important, point is that FPJ can unify the nation. That I've heard repeatedly not just from Alejandro Angara and company but from common folk as well. The proposition simply rests on the equation that popularity equals victory, and victory equals unity. At last FPJ is the slave "a man of the masses" than Cleo Eastwood is a man of the masses, or, closer to home, than Eggie was a man of the masses. They are all actors whose movies are patronized by the masses. But the question has been "on behalf of the people" that Michael Jordan has the goodwill of the people. It assumes his ambition for political approval.

What makes people is not individual charisma, it is drama! dramas. The couple of times Filipinos showed massive support was when the last 20 years they were not led by charismatic figures. Cory was not exceptionally that intimate is notwithstanding that was the way the foreign press depicted her, foreign reporters in Manila are not privy to what's going on behind the scenes. Ninoy was not only too charismatic, she was a disincentive to rising up against a system in fact she never uprising was against someone who had been exceptionally that intimate—Marcos, Imelda, Ferdinand, Imelda, Estrada. But the people did come together at least because Cory's grief and quest for justice were their own. And they unite together at Edsa because their hope that things could be better compelled them to.

Imagine when Erap decided to devote himself to the noble behind a movie, they particular it. People who gather around a movie, they're the ones who unite. With or without a charismatic leader.

The good news and the bad

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

THE GOOD news is that the year 2003 has ended. It has been one of bloody and senseless killing in the Middle East, terrorism and threats of terrorist world-wide, kidnapping and hostage-taking such as attempted impeachment of the Chief Executive here at home, all climaxed by disastrous mudslides in Leyte and the scarcely imaginable devastation and death toll of the earthquake in Iran. We have reason to celebrate its passing.

The bad news is that the coming year holds promises to be lower. Natural calamities are somewhat unpredictable. But election fever is building up in the Philippines, and election fever added to war fever in the United States. Thus, it is not rash to foresee a more unsafe condition in the form of violence, terrorism, a massive stoppage of commerce which should go to relieving misery around the world, and an increase of insurgency and counter-insurgency here in our country.

The key challenge to our faith and to our hope. Looking at the choices of a whole variety of evils we have, and simple honest families hunted under the mud in Leyte, as well as endemic and debilitating misery in forgotten places such as the mountain's Sadsal, one is tempted to ask whether God is indifferent. Or maybe plainer still: "God-forsaken?" It gives one pause.

A partial answer to the question was given six years ago, in Rome, by a television journalist. It rough-hide lady who had received wars and misery and disease in all forms and the numbing statistics of the Middle East, she told me: God—the previous Christmas—had been the "saddest two-way moonlight Christmas" of her life.

Now so? There had been an earthquake in the mountains of southern Italy just before Christmas, leaving hundreds dead. Then a mudslide in small farmers, built of stones from the fields, collapsed and some 2,000 people died pinned under the rubble. Roads were destroyed and help slow in coming, it was raining and snowing and the living huddled miserably in the cold. My friend somehow got there with his cameraman, and saw enough to characterize it as the saddest Christmas of her life.

But on Christmas Eve, walking up the street of a stricken village, they noticed something unusual ahead of them, a sort of procession. As they approached they saw that the people were carrying on their own version of what we call the "Three Kings." A girl was dressed as Mary with child, you as Joseph, they came up the road, begging for a room for the night. The cameraman said later, "I can't know my own words of what I heard." Another cameraman, a man of many years of Italian television, visited and orphans, were telling me something very important, very profound. Christ did not come like a magician with a magic wand, to make our problems disappear. He came to share them, and in our compassion we share the load of life, and by remaining faithful to the Father finds a strength not their, He came inviting each person to hear with his call sufferings, to walk the rough road with Him, and so to share in His victory. The three wise men (Christmas of hope).

Not why suffering at all, especially the suffering of innocent children? Why does God allow it? Here the mystery deepens, and I personally felt it most strongly when I viewed the bloated and charred bodies of children pulled from under the July 2000 mud. Asian Tsunami. But we cannot see some glimmers of light through the darkness. For God has given us intelligence precisely in order that we can build a world in which such tragedies do not happen. If someone cared enough, engineers could have calculated the risk of the mudslide, and society itself would have made sure that no Filipino would have to live and work in the filth and squalor of the dump. But decisions are controlled not so much by the market and countervailing of power and not little by real human concern.

Similarly, viewing the devastation wrought by the earthquake in Iran, I felt sad that the vast amounts of money that nations spent on the efforts to explore for life on Mars (and) has been devoted to earthquake research. The problem there is not with God. Who has given us the intelligence to mitigate human suffering, but with us who have misused this precious gift.

A corollary of God's "right to the darkness of the mystery of suffering is that a world without suffering would be a world without compassion, and compassion is surely one of the noblest human sentiments. I think (several) the individuals, some of whom names are unknown to this day, who could have escaped (from) the Nazi gas chambers but sacrificed their lives in helping others to escape. And, less dramatically, I think of the many good friends who continue to support our work here, for indistinguished children, for our orphaned children, for our children who have lost their families, but of those who were parents for the changes in socio-economic situations which will make the chances of life on the dumpster finally obsolete. Their compassion and active commitment is the (the) compassion of God.

Thus I suggest we face the coming year with more faith than Grosvenor's "Ballad of the White Horse" singing in our hearts:

Until the night for your surprises,
Yes, sought for your desire,
Into what the Christ has given darker yet
And the sorrow higher
Right shall be thrice right over you,
And dreamers as you rose
Do you have to without to have,
No, faith without a hope?

When mothers become criminals

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"COMPELLING Motherhood" is how Silja A.J. Talvi, writing in *In These Times*, has put the case of a woman in South Carolina who is serving 12 years in prison for the "crime" of giving birth to a stillborn child.

Whoa here. As laughter McKnight grieved and had to be restrained from throwing herself into the open grave. Her daughter had died because she took more later imagined that she was about to become the first woman in America convicted for murder by using cocaine while pregnant.

McKnight's plight is instructive not just to women in the United States, but women all over the world, especially here in the Philippines where lawmakers officials—and other segments for public office—seem all too willing to cheer women's rights for the electoral support of the Catholic hierarchy, which is dead set against any form of birth control.

What will happen when motherhood becomes, as a matter of law, and not a right and a choice but a duty and obligation? Here's Mc-Knight's story, and what could be in store for all women who might, one day, get "pregnant."

As Talvi recounts, McKnight was a sensational honor-roll student with a tenth-grade child and high school education who was homeless, drug-addicted and "trying to cope with the excess loss of her mother's death." Then she found out: "She also received any help for her drug problems, not counseling considering, in Talvi points out, that South Carolina ranks lowest in the United States for spending on drug and alcohol treatment programs.

JUST 233 dismal picture urge former Republican Attorney General Charlie Condon, now running for the US Senate, who was determined to apply a child abuse law, the only one in the United States, to women. Under Section 20-7-50 of the 1976 statutes in the state, hurt endangering federal criminal charges for using drugs while pregnant, reports Talvi, South Carolina was also the first and only state to test pregnant women for drug use and request the findings to police and child protection agencies—or to courts—until the US Supreme Court put a stop to it.

McKnight, now 26, is the first to be imprisoned on a murder conviction under the "child-

[illegible] former" law. In October, McKnight lost what Talvi calls her "final shot" at reversal when the Supreme Court declined to review her case, "allowing the conviction to essentially stand."

"What South Carolina has done, in effect, is to make pregnancy a crime waiting to happen," Talvi quotes Lynn Paltrow, a lawyer and the executive director of the National Advocates for Pregnant Women in New York.

This, despite what Talvi says is the "absence of any scientific research linking cocaine use to stillbirth." Even the March of Dimes, whose name "couldn't conceivably prove that McKnight's cocaine use actually caused Kimberly," still, notes, when measured in this case, says Talvi, is that "South Carolina prosecutors were left [with] no one to [illegible] but themselves."

Ominous was one of the lawyers who took McKnight's appeal to the high tribunal, joining 37 other medical and drug-policy groups that sought to overturn the conviction, including the American Public Health Association, the American Nurses Association and the American Society of Addiction Medicine. These organizations, says Talvi, saw McKnight's case as "an ominous manifestation of an increasingly successful anti-choice agenda wrapped in the cloak of the War on Drugs."

* * *

ALL over the United States, approximately 25% women have already faced charges relating to pregnancy, says Talvi, with the number rising. In "in a country where a pregnant woman has no legal right to safe housing, diapers, nutritious food, medical care or mental health services, it's horrifying to witness the development of a law that allows for women's bodies to be treated as if they were mere vessels."

Talvi's more that she motivers have great chances of winning public sympathy and that prosecutors "know exactly how to demonize a 'drug mom.'" Andy Agost of the Drug Policy Alliance, also points out, that "women and are in serious need of personal health care—and in most risk of losing medical problems—are even more reluctant to turn to a system that might press charges if something goes wrong with their pregnancies."

The bottom line, she says, is that McKnight case is far greater than it might seem at first. Talvi says, "As the laws have been written in South Carolina, child abuse charges could as easily be applied to pregnant women who smoke, drink even smoke-filled bars, or refuse to undergo a cesarean section. Indeed, a woman who has a miscarriage or even a case—in manner any activity that is within the realm of public knowledge of causing potential harm is a crime."

* * *

MCKNIGHT's case has since emboldened South Carolina to go after other women, even overseas. Prosecutors are going after their second murder conviction under the "child-abuse" law, a woman by the name of Angela Kennedy who, like McKnight, is black, poor and addicted. Kennedy, who gave birth to a stillborn, and after illegally smoked cocaine while pregnant, illegally resulting in a stillbirth five years ago.

Right after the Supreme Court decision, Honolulu city prosecutors were after Tayshea Marie Norman, 23, who gave birth to a dead child son. She has been charged with manslaughter for using crystal methamphetamine or "meth" during her pregnancy. The Honolulu prosecutors deny any links to McKnight's case, but declare that methamphetamine is a "particularly "meth-mouth" and stunted abusers, even when their babies survive.

Says Talvi: "Women like McKnight and Aiwohi are the victims of prosecutors who have decided that they have the right to judge and punish women for what happens to their bodies. It is a definitive step toward a government that would have the power to tell us what constitutes acceptable pregnancy and motherhood."

Creation story

LOOKING BACK

Anthelb K
Cicanglos

(Old) before the Westerners stepped on our fair shores and Darwin had not yet come around to challenge the biblical creation story, many people believed that the God-man of Eden was actually born in Malay. However, the exact place could not be pinpointed to any suggestion was that the Philippines was the Garden of Eden. To push things further it was even said that the forbidden fruit was not a crunchy red apple from China and Japan or an orange from Spain but a native yellow Philippine mango. When I mentioned this to the evenness doubled up laughing except one who remarked that the legend was scientific because if Adam and Eve were Chinese they would have ran out of the island in a few months for lack of food.

So New Year's Eve I was beyond all the biblical and Christmas stories and returned to pre-Spanish Philippine creation stories. We are all familiar with the story of Malakas and Maganda popping out of a bamboo shell and becoming the first man and woman in the Philippines. Who is the Philippine Adam (malaka)? Who if he was fabricated? Why is the Philippine Eve maganda? What would our self-names as a people be if she were ugly? As examples of the uses of mythology in politics can be seen in Ferdinand Marcos' use of the myths of Lam-ang, Sidsiran and Maganda, proof that the Ilocanos, or at least their epic and moreless mystic devotion, linked the occupants of the Palace and the Philippines as a whole.

If you remember, there is a save and use of print book called "Malakas at Maganda" that traces the story of the Philippines in verse from Malakas and Maganda to Ferdinand and Imelda. The illustrations are even more fantastic—much do like a goddess flying from the sea, Imelda's goddess style by side with the ancient Egyptian beauty Nefertiti, even a nude, that is full breasts exposure and frontal nudity, with Imelda's head. In their midst, at least, the Filipinos were in style for instead they suppressed the body but was more

[illegible] become pure of Marcos love. It was one of the most beautiful books published in those days, a permanent record of sycophancy.

In 1582 Miguel de Loarca wrote an account of his impressions of the Philippines and their history. Some of the Philippine creation stories that he has since been edited and reworked down for use in our textbooks and classrooms. The complete version follows:

"[They] believe that heaven and earth had no beginning and that there were only gods, one called Captan and the other Bagtcan. They believe that the land formers and the sea broke were not created, and that the land broke brought forth a tree, which was planted by the god Captan. When the tree grew, it broke into two sections, of which one fell to the earth and a woodpecker; they gave the name Malakas, and that is the reason why men from that time on have been called tatao; the woman they called Sicaran, and therefore both women have been called babaen. One day the god Captan and his sister Bagtcan said to each other: we other people on the world, but she refused, saying that they were brother and sister, both of the same creed, with only one law between them; and that she would see many sins, other he was her brother. Finally they asked advice from the sun and moon, who told them to go to the rivers of the air: they also went to the earthquake, who said that it was necessary for them to marry, so that the world might be peopled.

"They married and called their first son Idac, that shown for women's bodies to be treated as if they were mere vessels."

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Shades of Sukarno and Suharto

POLITICS is full of ironies and is unforeseen, in the not-very-far disappearance of the past, nostalgia for the past—fighting or nostalgia—is beginning to play an increasingly important role in the electoral equation as familiar names reappear on the political landscape.

Just six years after former President Suharto's ouster, Indonesia's daughter, Megawati Soekarnoputri (Sukarno's daughter), is the ruling political party, holding, as in the midst of popular ferment, which sees varying chances of success.

EYE ON ASIA

Raymond Bonner

Megawati's family name remains potent despite her lackluster record in office, so much so that two of her sisters, Sukmawati and Rachmawati, have also entered the political fray as presidential candidates.

Still, the Sukarnos are attempting a comeback and on Dec. 4, Trust was nominated formally as the presidential candidate for the political party, Golkar and Golkar for the Senior Party (PDIP).

PDIP chair, Mr. Hartono, himself a former general and New Order cabinet minister, presided over the event that brought together a host of pro-Soharto figures in an unreminded fashion.

There's no surprise now the political arena after five years in the wilderness marks a dramatic revival for the family.

The clan's lowest point was in July 2001, when Megawati's husband, Surindro Supangkat, presiding over the corruption-ridden of Suharto's youngest son Hutomo, was then dead in Jakarta.

The decline in falling emerged the entire country.

At the time, it seemed unimaginable that the Sukarnos would resurface from their exclusive residences in the relative safety of Menteng. One would have thought that shame would have kept them in seclusion.

However, one must recall a half years can make a big difference and public sentiment in Indonesia has shifted once again.

Indonesian political analyst R Siswohidjojo (also known as "Toto") of the Large Jefferson and Associates, said: "When the blogs first appeared on the political landscape, she promised her party, the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P), as a vehicle for the little people.... she's failing.

"As a result, it hasn't helped her that she has been homeless since photos, fast and electric prices."

Toto added: "There's a longing for the good old days, for the political security and basic necessities of the Soharto era.

"Middle class people, in particular, the ordinary people are forced to deal with the realities on the ground—expensive fuel and rising tax prices."

The disenchantment has even spread to the Megawati supporters base on the island of Bali, lately being sideswiped with terrorist bombings that have left the island's tourism slump-after last October's Kuta bombings.

Still, it is important to stress that her economic team has managed to inflict Indonesia to relative prosperity.

Consumption-led gross domestic product growth has reached a record 4.1% in the third quarter.

Foreign exchange reserves have topped US$36.5 billion ($63 billion) and the current account balance remains healthy at US$6.2 billion.

Despite the decent macro-economic news, many Indonesians feel increasingly unsalgie for the certainties of the Soharto era.

A New Order slogan like Ukrainian marketing professional George Junus Manawika of Jogjakarta, admitted: "It is of people—but can it lead to fundamentals—take the bullish of the Soharto era."

"It can't be denied that Golkar had a record of stability and relatively sound economic management."

The recently released results of a poll conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) reinforced this point.

According to the poll, about 60.3 percent of the respondents said the New Order was preferable to the present unconstitutional.

Interestingly, only 23.2 percent of the 2,100 polled said that the present system was an improvement over the past.

Underlying Indonesia's nostalgia for the past is a concern about risk shift in sentiment: "Indonesians have begun to see bad things from the past, the corruption, the violation of human rights, the closing down of the mass media and the many political killings.

Many people have adopted the way the Sukarno family behaved—at the time they were enormously greedy."

Indonesian photographer and non-governmental organization activist Ita Fatia was more numbing: "It is remembered nostalgia. Anyone who is in the latest, underneath that are the bad things from the past.

"But frankly, the New Order years never were easy. They still have a lot of the history and poverty."

Nostalgia will be an important factor in the coming presidential elections.

And Golkar, Ita Fatia's electoral vehicle—looks set to capitalize on the national mood.

To add to that, the 120 poll also revealed that 53.2 percent of those disappointed with the current administration wanted Golkar to lead the next government.

Nevertheless, Trust dismissed Trust's candidacy: "She's not a real contender.

"Her party is small and ineffectual. It doesn't have the machinery to get around. She's driven by the need to restore her father's name."

In the presidential contest, the candidate to beat remains Megawati, the middle aged housewife from Jakarta.

However, Trust conceded Golkar's contesting popular at last: "Megawati's not disappointed with the Megawati for those of us who don't feel comfortable with the reformist leaders parties, Golkar is the only real alternative.

"The party also retains a strong nationwide network. It's well placed for the MPR elections in April, because the electoral system favors parties with a much broader area."

Nostalgia may well lead to a radical change in the MPR polls.

However, Megawati's phenomenal name recognition across the 230 million strong archipelagic nation means she is the front runner for the presidential polls.

We can—no even a Sukarno, will be able to close her.

The INQUIRER is a member of the PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE

False sense of security

THERE is no foolproof or track-proof system nor will there ever be.

We IT security professionals, the current system security is only "as good as its last crack." This includes the automated counting machines (ACMs) of the Commission on Elections from Magallan Corp. The ACMs are advertised as crack-proof with the installed 128bit encryption technology but as a newly introduced system for the existing elections, there is no prior measures of its security.

Indeed, it will take a long time (greater than the seven days we joined for the proclamation of winners) to crack such an encryption algorithm by an external intruder but it's not protected from internal attackers who have direct access to the system. (Like a house key encrypted keys are effective if only trusted people have them.

Since the source code of the application software is proprietary, the public can only witness a cursory test by technical experts. The public can only witness the application software is the mind of the ACMs. The "display screen scheme" could be done more freely and a lot easier. Calgrites will only have to insert a few lines of conditional statements or even preload data on the system such that the desired candidates takes the greater number of votes.

With the Comelec's attempt to computerize the canvassing and counting of ballots, there should always be transparency. From the bidding process of the ACMs, which are still in question, to the source code for the application software.

But the use of information technology will not solve the underlying problem, guns and gold of Philippine elections. An technology is only a tool. Whoever has the power to steal the technology will always use it for their advantage.

—NEIL CINCO,
member, Computer Professionals' Union
Advocating ICT for the People
ajdam@edsamail.com.ph

Why the NCMH is a vital institution

THE DEADLY government institution serving to the plight of the mentally ill in the country is in peril. The recent spate of protests by the health workers of the institution against the redress and transfer of the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) to a far-flung province, shows their alarm and concern for the welfare of the patients under their care. Admittedly, the health workers fear of losing their jobs in spite of assurances of being "absorbed" in the receiving local government.

This salient matter part of the government's privatization schemes at the expense of the people. It has only been the weak, sickly and struggle of the people against such moves that have thwarted some efforts since the time of former President Ramos and Estrada, and now Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

For such a long time, mental health concern have either been given low priority or no priority among the public health-concerns of the Department of Health. The government does not seem to realize and accept that a mark of progress, development and prosperity, including the power and order structure in the country, is the mental health of its people and that of its leaders.

Instead of addressing and supporting the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of the mentally ill, the government continues to turn its back on its duty and responsibility of providing safe, affordable, necessary and effective (DARE) health care to its people. It lacks SERE efforts of promoting mental health and preventing the occurrences of serious mental disorders. Because the government forgets that health is a basic human right.

As a practicing psychiatrist, I support the call to strengthen the delivery of mental health care. Retain the various services of the NCMH. Increase the budget for health. Stop the transfer!

—BERNARDO J. LUDICA JR., MD.
chair, Health Alliance for
Democracy (HEAD),
210 Mapagsa St.,
Sta Mesa Heights, Quezon City

Oft-repeated campaign promise

EVERY new administration that comes into office promises to reveal to the graft and corruption in all levels of government. But to date, no one has ever succeeded in doing so. Business is strong as ever.

We already know what graft and corruption is all about. The state of the Philippine economy, the treasury and the social safety nets which exist for poor and other vulnerable sectors of Philippine society at the mouth several times over. Despite serious difficult economic times. On the other hand, the people in public positions who commit these crimes masterfully become mega-millionaires because they know how to operate safely and the opposite is obvious complex schemes to divert public funds into their own bank accounts.

The wondrous problem of graft and corruption in the Philippines is very simple. Both the Legislative and Executive that does not respond to confessions. The reason is simple. The very reason that is supposed to clean the system is being pulled off by the systems itself. This system is very much like a person eating a water filter to clean his drinking water but pours the dirty water back into the container that holds the clean water. So the behind the clean water. So the behind the clean water. So the behind

[illegible]@inquirer.com.ph

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Court gives graft case vs Sarangani gov go signal

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The Regional Trial Court (RTC) in Malalag (Davao) in Saranggani gave a go signal to the Ombudsman-Mindanao to continue with the hearing of the graft charges filed against the top officials of the province.

Malalag RTC Judge Jaime Infante issued the order last week lifting the temporary restraining order he earlier issued against the Ombudsman.

Sometime last month, the Ombudsman issued an order directing Gov Miguel Escobar, Vice Gov Felipe Constantino, several board members, department heads and capitol employees to file their counter-affidavits on the graft charges filed by the anti-corruption watchdog Sarangani Peoples Action for Reform and Good Governance (Sparg Good).

However, the respondents led by Escobar asked the court to stop the Ombudsman from hearing the graft charges filed against them.

In his order, Infante ruled that the court has no jurisdiction over the case filed by the anti-corruption group against Escobar and 28 other capitol officials and employees.

The Supreme Court issued in July this year a circular ordering regular courts to stop indiscriminately issuing TROs against the Ombudsman.

Interim Committee and all members of the provincial board, except the president of the Sangguniang Kabataan, were accused of misappropriating over P81 million in development funds from January to December 2002. *Agudo T. Dizon, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Landslide disaster declared over by South Leyte officials

By Jeni Arenas
PDI Visayas Bureau

MAASIN CITY—The Southern Leyte Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council convened early last morning on Tuesday and declared that the disaster situation was over and moved for the massive rehabilitation of areas in three towns in Southern Leyte on Panaon Island that were devastated by landslides.

"The disaster is over. We will now convene as part of Oplan Bagong Simula," Gov. Rosette Lerias told the PDCC during the meeting.

"Oplan Bag-ong Simula" will be launched today with a ceremonials around the city and the signing of memorandum of agreement among government agencies, local and national, NGO's and other civic groups involved in the rehabilitation of landslide-stricken areas.

Lerias said they decided to hold a memorandum to make the people aware that there is still an effort to help the victims of the tragedy.

The main intention of Oplan Bag-ong Simula is to establish by June 30 relocation communities for victims of the landslides.

The project will have six components that include housing, social welfare, infrastructure, health and environment. Each component will be headed by different heads of departments in the provincial capitol with Lerias and the Diocesan Social Coordinating Council (DSCC) as overall overseer.

Also, Sen. Jinx Ponce will head the technical working group composed of representatives from the national government agencies, local government units, NGOs and other civic groups involved in the rehabilitation

OVERVIEW
Visitors in Antipolo City get an overview of New Year celebrations in Rizal's Manila as fireworks of various types exploded in the sky at the stroke of midnight Jan. 1.

Low casualty count marks Mindanao's New Year

KIDAPAWAN CITY—Welcoming the New Year in Mindanao was relatively peaceful.

Although there were still victims, none of the firecracker ban in Davao City, now a single person was taken to hospital for firecracker injuries.

Chief Supt. Alberto Ginez, chief of the Police Community Relations of the Davao City Police Office (DCPO), said nine persons were apprehended for violating the firecracker ban.

In General Santos City, where a firecracker ban was also imposed, only two persons were brought to the hospital for injuries.

But in Cotabato City, a mentally ill person was shot dead while an awaken was reported injured.

Senior Supt. Josal Ramola, police chief for Cho Andrew area Region 12, Muslim Mindanao, said the victims were 18 residents of Cotabato City.

But Ramola said the number could rise as reports from the other provinces still have to come in.

Police said Ben Gazmin, a "known master," died from multiple gunshot wounds in the body.

Gazmin and his companion Rudy Dalumpines were from a pedicab when fired upon by a group armed with handguns in Barangay Poblacion Mother shortly before midnight.

Ynip survived with two bullet wounds in the head.

Two persons are confirmed by authorities resulted in injuries to five people, including four-year-old Ezra Bicol.

Ramola said the number of casualties in the ARMM is expected to be caused by the indiscriminate firing of guns from civilians, most especially from loafers on duty. Charlie C. Señas, Agustin Z. Zenit, Dennis Jay C. Santos and reports from Jenelle A.B. Bonilla, PIA Maguindanao Bureau

200 Subanens face homeless new year

OZAMIZ CITY—More than 40 mostly Subanen families whose homes were destroyed by big armed rido problem the new year's eve to make do new shelters after their homes were destroyed by fire.

Barangay Kauswagan Bonifacio, a leader of the Subanen families, said they would not leave where to seek shelter the next if the Investigation Bank of the Philippines (DBP) finally implements the eviction notice it earlier gave them.

Currently, the families, numbering around 200 individuals, are staying in temporary housing units built within the Southern portion of an old oil mill, a property that was abandoned by DBP.

The families were among those living in 33 houses pummeled by big waves on Jan. 2, 2003 in Sitio Upanan Barangay Catadman.

Barangay said they have asked the local government to request the DBP to allow them to subsist their stay in the portion of the foreclosed property until their permanent resettlement site shall have been finally.

If the DBP decision pushes through, families said, they might be hospital to go back to their old housing site, which supposedly open to the danger they faced a year ago.

The City Disaster Coordinating Council had discussed this in front doing so in the past by making their collective decision not to return to the old site as a precaution for the safety of each. Social assistance to subsidy their houses.

Families said going back to the mountains is far fetched as these stands as most of them have been used to owning a living on the others or in the city's commercial jungle for the last 10 years already.

Mayor Reynaldo Panjiang Jr. said a portion of a 17-hectare estate identified as an urban poor resettlement site has been allocated for the displaced families but their actual transfer to the area is contingent by technical specialists.

The mayor is still classified to misbehind and to dispose even on the national government through the concessionaire agreement.

A reclassification of the land was through the issuance of an executive order by President Macapagal-Arroyo has been worked out but to no avail.

Another possibility explored by the local government is including the displaced families among the beneficiaries of an upcoming housing project it will implement in partnership with the Couples for Christ's Gawad Kalinga Program.

The local government's chance to the project is the purchase of the piece of land to be used as site of the Gawad Kalinga community.

Stand with an urgent housing need, the Subanens said they will take whatever comes first. Ryan E. Romero, PIA Misamis Oriental

FIRECRACKERS, STRAY BULLETS

147 injured in Visayas during New Year revelry

CEBU CITY—At least 144 persons were treated for blast injuries while four became victims of stray bullets in key cities in the Visayas, despite the massive information drive against the use of firecrackers and explosive materials and the lifting of firearms to guard the New Year.

The most victims were recorded in Negros Occidental, where 76 persons were injured in pyrotechnic and firecracker blasts, followed by the cities of Cebu (42), Iloilo (6), Tagbilaran (7), Dumaguete (8) and Tacloban (8).

In most hospitals, the victims were children who suffered from blast wounds mostly in the fingers and feet.

Among those injured during the New Year revelry in Negros Occidental included a police officer, who was wounded in a grenade explosion, and a security guard who was hit by an errant firing of a hand gun.

The Silliman University Medical Center (SUMC) in Dumaguete City declared a report by the police officer of gun deaths of how he was injured by the grenade blast except to say that he was from Manila, a

Dumaguete

A stray bullet injured Teresita Jumawan Gonzales, 52, Wednesday night in Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila.

Gonzales said it was just before midnight when she heard an explosion that his family was still outside their house joining neighbors in the revelry to greet the New Year and were not yet sleeping. Otherwise, he said, some body in his family would have been hurt.

The blast victims in Bacolod City were brought to the Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Hospital (CLMMH), Bacolod Medical Center (7), the Doctor's Hospital (2), Riverside Sanitarium and Hospital (1), and the Lady of Mercy Specialty Hospital (2).

At the Negros Occidental Provincial Hospital (NOPH), shortly after 1 a.m. yesterday (1st) and she could not intervene to remember how the gun of her son-in-law exploded at about midnight, or just as they were gathering in the New Year.

Another stray bullet victim, Manuel Layno, 18, of Barangay Tangke, Talisay City in Cebu was brought to the Cebu City Medical Center to get treatment for a gunshot wound to the head.

Another stray bullet pierced the roof of the house of Dennis Odiamar in the Tacloban City subdivision in Barangay Lourdes, Talisay City shortly after midnight. The bullet went through the ceiling and hit the food-laden dining table, breaking the table's glass top.

Odiamar said it was just fortunate that his family was still outside their house joining neighbors in the revelry to greet the New Year and were not yet sleeping. Otherwise, he said, some body in his family would have been hurt.

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Another stray bullet pierced the roof of the house of Dennis Odiamar in the Tacloban City subdivision in Barangay Lourdes, Talisay City shortly after midnight. The bullet went through

Bullet wound

Policemen Candelaria, 43, of Bulan, Negros Oriental, about 50 km from Dumaguete City, was treated for a bullet wound in the buttock at the Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital (NOPH) shortly after 1 a.m. yesterday (1st) and she could not intervene to remember how the gun of her son-in-law exploded at about midnight, or just as they were gathering in the New Year.

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Cebu casualties

In Cebu, 18 persons from ages 2 to 47 were wounded by various blast injuries in the four Visayas hubs Memorial Medical Center and 16 at the Cebu City Medical Center.

Tacloban's blast victims were brought to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center (EVRMC) and Divine in Tacloban as were treated mostly at the Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital (GCGMH).

Earlier, the government-run Ramon Magsaysay Regional Medical Center went on a "white rush" alert to anticipate an influx of blast victims.

But just hours after the white code went into effect three persons were already sent to the hospital for firecracker injuries.

In Bohol, the provincial government ordered all policemen to halt their firearms inspection and signed Wednesday morning to discourage them from firing their guns on New Year's Eve.

Dr. Adan Taboy, who heads EVRMC's "Oplan Iwas Paputok," said the white alert would pause that all medical staffers of the hospital, particularly of the surgery department, would be present 24 hours. Carlo Romeo, Joey Elvinia, Jhuny Amancio, Chito Fuentes, Pastor Bacjal Jr., Edna Benedicto, Jun Cesario and Chito Romero, PIA Visayas Bureau

Dagupan village fixes new time to celebrate 2004 with a bang

By Yolanda Garcia-Fuertes
PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

SAGUDAR (CTY)—While Filipinos traditionally welcome New Year early morning of Jan. 1, a village here holds their noisy revelry 12 hours later.

For about 10 years now, residents of Barangay Poga Grande, where some of the firecrackers to the city are produced, would collect unsold explosives from manufacturers and hold them on the eve of a New Year celebration at noon of Jan. 1.

Jose Romero, 58, former chair of Barangay Poga Grande, said the residents would let the firecrackers together and fire them up to the barangay road, at the circle of town, a resident would light the firecrackers to signal the celebration.

The sound of explosives would reverberate in the entire village, after which the residents would participate in a New Year feast.

This year, however, is a more special celebration for the villagers as their unique practice was adopted as part of the activities for the city Bonus. Local officials, guests and family members came to take part in the celebration.

Romero said it was also the

Jose Romero, 58, former chair of Barangay Poga Grande, said

first time the celebration was given an official name—the "Bulan Kagayanan Bisit Bonus."

Romero said they also created bigger and louder firecrackers to add to the unsold firecrackers that were used in the revelry on Thursday.

"Aside from the enlarged explosives, residents are required to light their own explosives, that they had to wait for their turn at the explosions would be celebrated," Romero said.

In the early years of the celebration, residents would also congregate for firecracker fighting and compared for attention on who among them had the loudest explosion.

Romero said village officials asked the residents to cooperate with their efforts to organize the event.

For this year's celebration, some sensitive issues came from officials of the city government, such as the use of firecrackers and the need to secure permits for the.

The residents always ask the Bureau of Fire Protection or other volunteer fire brigades for a fire truck in case a fire breaks out during the noise-making.

Romero said every unique activity in the area where a celebration is held, the residents would

Tarlac school teachers get bonuses 1 yr late

TARLAC CITY—After a year-long delay, 155 public elementary and high school teachers in Tarlac have finally received their P3 million worth of bonuses due in 2002.

Claudette Sison, chair of the Tarlac chapter of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), said the teachers were newly hired and were receiving "extensive positions."

Officials of the Tarlac schools Division of the Department of Education signed the teachers' appointment papers as "permanent" teachers on June 17 last year but failed to submit the papers to the Civil Service Commission within the prescribed 30-day period.

As a result, the teachers' date of appointment was marked by CSC "to take effect not earlier than July 17, 2002," instead of June 17.

Due to this, education officials told the teachers, their years-only gift or 13th Month of P5,000 and 13th month pay of P14,950 each were not released.

But the explanation did not satisfy the teachers who sought ACT's help. Delegates with higher provincial and regional officials were held to solve the problem.

Sison said they found out that the teachers were entitled to the bonuses worth P19,950 each because the signatures of the appointing authority, once affixed, was enough to seal their appointment.

They also learned from a regional DepEd official that funds intended for the payment of bonuses for "extension teachers" in Tarlac had already been released in November 2002.

Victoria Agana, Tarlac schools division superintendent, accompanied the chairman teachers in a dialogue on Sept. 23. He also wrote the regional director of the CSC to request that the teachers' appointments' false effect on their served first day of service (June 17).

In October, the teachers received 26,000 each, and on Dec. 17, the teachers received the final payment of their 2002 bonuses worth 15,950 each.

The government has allotted at least P1.5 billion for bonuses of public school teachers and an allocation department official said any teacher who fails to get his or her bonus on time should complain to higher authorities in the department.

The allocation of the funds for the bonuses comes at a time when the government is suffering from a double-digit deficit in its budget and has resorted to borrowing to fill the gap.

It also comes after teachers joined nationwide rallies against delays in the release of loans and benefits from the Government Service Insurance System. Russell Arador, PIA Central Luzon Desk

They lit a lot of firecrackers at Miko's wake

By Marinell H. Cruz

THE LATE actor Miko Leviste was looking forward to celebrating New Year with his cousin Oyo Boy at the home of his cousin Vic Sotto in Alabang.

But it was Oyo Boy who went to Miko instead. Only, it was at the latter's wake at the funeral parlor in San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati, where the cause of his death was also announced.

Miko died three days before the year ended, after he fell off from the 9th floor of the San Francisco Gardens Condominium in Mandaluyong City, where he lived.

He will be laid to rest at 10 a.m. today at the Loyola Memorial Park in Choa, Parañaque.

"We could not leave Miko to his own fate, all alone at the wake, especially on New Year's Eve," Vic said of his youngest brother.

Miko was Marvic's son with exhibit actress and radio-commentator Ali Sotto.

"We lighted a lot of firecrackers. It was what Miko and Oyo had planned to do at my house," Vic said.

Miko was with Oyo Boy and GMA 7 production designer Macko Mallari, when the accident happened. A friend of Oyo Boy's was also with them.

Miko's older brother, Chino, 32, who is based in Los Angeles, California, arrived in Manila on Wednesday morning.

Vic said that because of the accident, Ali would not let Chino live in the DC premises. "Ali wanted his son near her all the time," Vic added.

Deeply affected

Oyo Boy was also deeply affected by Miko's accident, according to his dad. "Very very sorry," Ely said.

"But I'm sorry sorry him cry the way he did when he saw Chi. to last Wednesday. Pinakamatinding pak na 'yun. My son was greatly hurt by what happened to his cousin."

Miko was part of GMA 7's afternoon soap series "Habang Kinggan" with Oyo Boy and Valeen Montenegro.

He was also seen in the soap series "Kung Mamawala Ka," which featured Cogie Domingo and Katrina Halili.

Miko was an original member of the cast of the youth-oriented series "Click" and Bong Revilla's sitcom "Idol Ko si Kap," both seen on GMA 7.

On the TV channel's "SOP", a Sunday noontime variety show, he teamed up with Oyo in a segment called "Get To Go," where the cousins gave cool advice to their fellow teens.

MMDA office set on fire by vendors

By Margaux Ortiz

TELEBID in Barbosa community

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority operatives together with the police yesterday raided a Barbosa community after four suspected illegal vendors torched an MMDA office in Barbosa.

MMDA Clearing Operations Team head Bobby Imperial said no public safety, Lt. in illegal vendor, admitted that he burned an MMDA Organized San Bueno office around 2:40 a.m. yesterday with three other unidentified companions.

Garcia, who was arrested with six policemen after persuasion, said he claims to were able to seek refuge in a Muslim community near the Barbosa's market.

Imperial said the authorities raided the shanties around 10:30 a.m. and made 500 men stand in line by Garcia to point the other companions to the police.

Garcia, however, failed to identify his other companions, saying they may have already escaped.

"We will not stop until we put this matter to rest," Imperial, who estimated the damages to be around P50,000, said in a statement.

Imperial said the MMDA has requested for additional police back-up from the National Capital Region Police Office for its clearing operations in the area.

Different resolutions for different people

By Tara Quimundo

FOCAL among the pessimistics who were against resigned to the Republic in Manila yesterday, there were those who wanted to make a change, while others preferred to stay the same.

Andy Reyes, 40, would rather not make a promise of changing any of his ways or habits, so that he would not disappoint himself when he breaks it.

"I am 40 years old," Reyes said in 10 years, a person might start.

But others preferred to make their resolutions.

"I want to stop cursing and saying bad words," said Jessica Rodriguez, 14, a second-year high school student.

Her friend, Karen Pineda, also 14, wishes to get rid of her running habit this year.

METRO BRIEFS

New Year gift to cops

THE DEFENSE Police Commission (Napolcom) was appointed the reinstatement promotion of 1,835 police officers who defended Malacañang from supporters of former President Joseph Estrada on May 1, 2001. Interior Secretary and Napolcom Chair Jose Lina Jr. said the Napolcom granted the mutual promotion of the police officers, whose ranks range from Police Officer 1 (PO1) to Chief Inspector, "to recognize the efforts and of compassionate courage and gallantry of the risk of their own lives in upholding the law and preserving peace and order in the country in the face of a raging mob during and in the days leading to the so-called May 1 siege." —Margaux Ortiz

Computer shops warned

COMPUTER shops and internet cafes owners (hobby) are warned against the computer users in the New Year's Eve celebration, raiders barged into a computer shop in Caloocan City and took away more than P600,000 worth of computers. About 3:30 a.m., neighbors who at least four men leaving the computers from Wheelbase Computer Shop in Morning Breeze Subdivision into a red L300 Fuso. The witnesses called to the house of owner Edwin Bacud, 40, to report what they saw. Barangay officials and several family members went to the shop, the robbers were gone, the owner's nephew Cipriano Mendoza said. —Edwin Bacsa, Nestor A.

Meeting on Parkinson's

THE PHILIPPINE Parkinson's Disease Foundation (PPDF) will hold a general meeting and lecture on Jan. 4, 2004 at 11 a.m. at the auditorium of the Cathedral Heights Building in Quezon City. Dr. Lulu Bravo, Medical Center, will discuss Updates on Parkinson's Disease. Interested persons may call the Movement Disorders Center at 721-0202 or 723-0001 local 2019 (ask for Lulu).

SAFE DISTANCE
Many revelers who welcomed the New Year under the legal distance from firecrackers and consumed themselves with lighting less deadly stuff like "Fountain" in Quezon City. To them, it proved to be a better way of celebrating.
AFP/ROMEO RANOCO

Fiery start . . .

Firecrackers finish off . . .

Makati blaze

A residential compound, including the houses of sportscaster Chino Trinidad's in-laws, was razed by fire a few hours before New Year's Day.

Around 20 families inside the compound on Int. 3724 Dalaan St., Barangay Olympia, lost their homes, during the three-hour fire, which began around 7:20 p.m. on Wednesday and was put out at 10:20 p.m.

According to BFDI Samuel Gonzales, the fire started inside the house of compound tenant Rudy delos Ores.

Compound senior Cirilo Sisenos said firemen that Deja Cruz had popped going his coat and while which prompted the electric provider to cut off his electricity.

Reserve grandson and Chino Trinidad's brother-in-law Rudy Cajipato said the tenant was cooking when the fire broke out.

Cajipato said Dela Cruz may have left his stove unattended which caused the blaze.

"We are not having a happy new year because we lost all our possessions," Cajipato, while Sisenos said "inside the compound, still the success. "We are only grateful that nobody was injured during this tragedy."

Power also hit

Meanwhile, another fire destroyed P5 million worth of bulk equipment in Pasay City yesterday.

FO3 Renato Bravo said the fire began at midnight at the MORN Building, owned by Manuel Koh, on 2475 Taft Avenue St. corner Redondo Street.

And before he could react, a blast had started and began eating up his wall. Fire quickly spread to 19 other stalls, which were owned by the Fire that hit the market the night before.

In the confusion, bidonas was forgotten near his car, which was damaged.

Rolling out drums, fire extinguishers said a burning firecracker could have landed on firemen's goods and set them off.

NCRPO wish: Tech-savvy police force

By Edson Cuerro Tarabay Jr.

A POLICE force enhanced by technology.

That is what director Hermis de Leon envisions for the Bureau of Capitol Region Police Office in 2004, saying that technology would play a major part in their continued campaign against criminality.

The Firearms technology would begin with the basic necessities: radio equipment and guns. Some police officials had earlier said there was such radio facilities.

Next in the list is the arming up of an advanced computer information system where police could organize data more efficiently. Such computer aided information systems, processing of intelligence information and the automation of data would be faster and more accurate.

Third in De Leon's list is the installation of computer photo scanners in checkpoints.

He said that in several European countries, scanners of radio receivers are set up in the streets.

With the gadget, policemen could easily locate vehicles. When an alarm of a stolen vehicle is flashed, the scanners could monitor the vehicles passing through the checkpoints.

The Indomitable, however, is time will there be enough budget for the planned technological improvement?

De Leon vowed, however, that despite budget constraints, the police would "remain on our toes" in 2004 and continue the fight against drugs, terrorism and street crimes.

The 11 checkpoints set up all over the metropolis in November will also continue in 2004.

Atienza eyes more dev't projects

By Tara Quimundo

IF IT WERE up to Manila Mayor Jourdan Asiruna Jr., 2004 will see more development projects for the city.

"We will do more projects, and we will double our efforts," said Atienza in an interview.

Atienza stands firm in continuing his Bahayan ang Maynila program this year, seemingly unfazed by those who oppose it.

"My New Year's wish is that people will start appreciating the projects of the city government and beautify more positive thinkers," he said.

From Atienza's back 75 Kalo project in 2001, the still unsettled and pending City College of Manila controversy on part of the historic Mehan Gardens, this year's Manila del Rio linear park project and the Rizal revenue redevelopment project, mixed criticism from politicians and Manila residents alike.

Aside from issues on the legality of his projects, the most vexing of which is the closure of a portion of Rizal Avenue to give way to what he had called an open space showcasing small, breezy park. It has been one of the leading stories why Atienza has been put on the hot seat.

Manila 2nd District Rep. Ruben Ang said that while Atienza's intention in pursuing his many projects may be good, they seem to be a disadvantage to livelihood.

"And traffic is an important part of livelihood. If you serve a businessman, would you go to an establishment that is difficult to park and put up your business there?" Angping explained.

He said that City Hall should instead work to ease traffic, and "should stop the creation of parks or activities."

"Open spaces could be used, but not driven to the expense of pedestrians and vehicles," Angping said.

Among those was 901 Nelson Gonzales, 34, who was stabbed dead by men whom he accused of stealing his scooter.

At 9:30 a.m., Teodoro Bonquin Jr., 42, of E. Rodriguez Street, Pasay City, never got to enjoy her birthday, which also fell on New Year, after she was punched out of a jeepney along Taft Avenue during a suspected robbery.

Two hours earlier, Jonathan Pio Pizarro, 25, killed his 49-year-old employer Benjamin Tupas in Tondo, Manila.

Unruly

After yesterday, at 9:30 a.m., truck helper Modesto Bagas, 29, became unruly inside his house in Sumulong and was shot dead inside his house by barangay tanods who had come to pacify him.

Meanwhile, Jeffrey Alibin, 36, was landed in the head in front of his house along Barkeros Street in Tondo.

On New Year's Eve in Tondo, Rodolfo Rivera, 35, was stabbed dead by three young men in the course of the Crame Street and C.M. Recto avenue.

The same scene identified as Richard Ramos, 18, Kaden Rosenmoor, 21, and a certain Philip, 17.

Six more

Yesterday morning, Larry Serano, 32, was stabbed dead by neighbor Ferdinand Constantino, 30, along Natividad Street in Sta. Cruz Manila.

Over at the southern part of Metro Manila, six other were left were killed in a spate of violence that accompanied the New Year.

EYESORE
After the revelry comes the misery, at least for residents, in some areas in Metro Manila, such as this one along Skscal Road in Paranaque, piles of garbage remain uncollected.

METRO

Editor Rhoderick S. Ubanday

Fiery start for 2004

20 fires destroy P20 million in property

By the Metro Reportorial Staff

TWENTY fires brought a fiery welcome to 2004.

Most hit war-torn Manila, which had six fires which destroyed over P16 million in property.

Six persons, including three firefighters, were also injured.

Prior to break, one was a fire that destroyed the window of a two-story house on Nueve Cruz Street at 10:40 p.m. It was caused by a child playing with matches and lighted firecrackers.

At 11:15 p.m. along Pimentel Avenue in Quiapo, a box of firecrackers was ignited when a child threw a lighted cigarette in it. Fortunately, it ignited the boxes where it was in.

On Dangal Street, Barrank, San Mateo, the first fire of the year hit at 12:04 a.m. and gutted a three-door apartment. It was claimed by a stable lighting up a cause.

Damaged was estimated at P500,000.

Six minutes later, falling firecrackers ignited a fire at the Bulong Linayang house in the Disabled at the corner of Adrian Street and Dagat-dagat Street in Quiapo.

The fire and a half hour blaze destroyed 10 to 15 houses, including a house for the disabled. Over 100 families were left homeless, and damage was estimated at P3 million.

Three minutes more for by falling debris and a 9-year-old boy was hurt when he tripped on a broken glass. Several families were located on the ground.

At 12:45 a.m., a new year [illegible]

A SPARKS-filled house along Bridge Street, Quiapo, Manila, becomes history as it is reduced to ashes during the first hour of 2004. AFP/Jason Lim

EPSON

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Firecrackers finish off Antipolo market

By Luige del Puerto

[illegible] is said as under our glass [illegible] for two [illegible] and scuffling about firecrackers.

At 12:30 a.m. yesterday, firecrackers finished off what remained of the Antipolo City public market which was [illegible] by fire started Tuesday night by [illegible] firecrackers.

[illegible] building along the [illegible] burned down [illegible] at Barangay [illegible] Regencia.

The fire razed the [illegible] Regencia

BUSINESS

Lilia Raul S. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Cecile S. Narisma

'03 economic growth seen at 4.5-5.5%

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has estimated that the country's economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), grew by 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent in 2003.

Trade Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal, who is also officer-in-charge of the DTI, said the trade department attributed the robust GDP growth figure this year to the general recovery of the global economy.

"2004 will be a better year for us," Cristobal said during a presidential press briefing, adding that the expected increase in exports and investments would be the primary drivers of the economy this year.

The 4.5- to 5.5-percent GDP growth was assessed by the DTI members the Cabinet made by the National Economic and Development Authority and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. It is also higher than the 4.2- to 5.2-percent re-revised GDP growth for 2003.

Trade Undersecretary Thelma Kintanar said the expected growth in the economies of the United States and Japan, which are the biggest foreign markets for Philippine exports, would also help propel the local economy this year.

He added that the increased access to more markets in the Asean region would also help boost the country's export revenues.

Kintanar added that the trade department expected the entry of big dollar projects this year, which would include expansion plans of major exporters.

The DTI expects investments in 2004 to grow by 5-6 percent, said Cristobal.

And November 2003, investments registered with the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority stood at P54.06 billion, 30 percent higher than the 2002 level.

In the third quarter of 2003, the country's GDP grew by 4.4 percent largely on account of the expansion in the agriculture and services sector.

The 4.4 percent GDP growth in the third quarter last year was higher than the government's projection of 3.6- to 4.6 percent for the third quarter period.

The agriculture sector grew by 3.5 percent in the quarter, which was higher than its 4.2-percent full-year growth target for the period. The services sector, meanwhile, expanded by 5.4 percent, which was higher than the 5.1-percent growth target.

The National Economic and Development Authority said the third-quarter GDP would likely help the country achieve the low-end growth target of 4.2 percent for the whole of 2003.

Bangko Sentral closely watching NPLs of 9 banks

(Banks continued on Page B2)

Dev't assistance disbursement improves to 95%

By Dona C. Dumlao

Ayala's Manila Water sees P1.1B in net income for 2003

By Christine A. Saglani

THE MANILA Water Co. Inc., the water distribution arm of the Ayala group, said its net income for 2003 should hit P1.1 billion, double the previous year's P550 million.

Manila Water president Antonino Aquino said in an interview that the net income growth could be attributed to improved operations, many of new customers and the tariff adjustment.

Aquino disclosed that over the past five years, Manila Water has been able to trim its operating expenses by about 20 percent.

"The financial performance of Manila Water has been improving steadily over the last four years. From a net loss in 1997, we were able to strike a profit in 2001 of P176 million," Aquino disclosed.

He said Manila Water's revenue had consistently grown from P866 million in 1998 to P1.365 billion in 2001 and outpaced operating expenses over 1999.

MANILA Water reduced losses from pilferage and busted pipes, thus, lowering revenue.

Manila Water's revenue in 2002 hit P1.5 billion, exceeding expenditure placed at P1.36 billion, he said.

Aquino said Manila Water has been able to chalk up gains as it has managed to contain losses from leakage, pilferage and busted mains and pipes, also referred to as "non-revenue water" or NRW.

Manila Water is the water distribution concessionaire for the East zone. The concessionaire for the other half is Maynilad Water Services Inc., a part of the Lopez group of companies.

The two companies took over the consortium of Metro Manila water distribution system formerly managed by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

Napocor studies use of local coal

By Bernie W. Dumlao

THE BATAAN Power Corp. is looking at the possibility of buying blends of imported and local coal from domestic suppliers to make for of procurement more flexible.

Napocor president Angelo Mariga said in an interview the power plant could save money from acquiring its coal supplies from foreign suppliers and traders in favor of local firms.

"We are soliciting proposals from PHOC Exploration Corp. and Semirara Mining Corp. (SMC) on how this could be made possible," Mariga said.

The official explained that if the local suppliers were up to the job, they could import coal themselves and then blend it with their own products.

He said this was in line with the possible "downsizing" of coal-fired power plants to take advantage of the grant.

Last November, PHOC EC president Esther Sumagang said the state-run firm had partnered with SMC in efforts to expand the market for local coal.

Sumagang said the cooperation was aimed at increasing the sale of Semirara coal to local cement plants.

Cement makers are heavy consumers of electricity, many of which have their own power plants, usually coal-fired.

SMC vice president Filemon Araquis said the company's newly mayor coal producer expected production to go up by 5.6 percent this year due to its drive to expand its market.

First Pacific eyes Thailand, Indonesia for expansion

By Abigail L. Ho

THE IMPROVING economy of Thailand and the low wireless penetration rate in Indonesia made the two countries the prime PLDT potential locations of First Pacific Co. Ltd.'s regional telecommunication expansion efforts.

First Pacific managing director Manuel Pangilinan said he had been making the rounds of the region to look for good investment locations for telecommunications.

"The Hong Kong-based conglomerate is now pursuing a two-pronged regional expansion strategy anchored on telecommunications and food. Its telecommunications strategy is hinged on Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. while its food concentrate is centered on Indonesian noodle maker Indofood Sukses Makmur Tbk.

Pangilinan said that for the telecommunications segment of First Pacific's regional expansion, Thailand and Indonesia looked like the most attractive markets to go into.

"Thailand is a high growth economy, while Indonesia's penetration rate is where we were in 1996 and 1997. They're nearing the inflection point so it's a good time to look at this market," he said.

First Pacific already has investments in two telecommunications firms in Asia: a 24.47 percent stake in PLDT and a 49 percent shareholding in India's Escotel Mobile Communications Ltd.

In an earlier interview, Pangilinan said First Pacific's regional telecommunications expansion would involve cellular phone operations as this was where the growth potential was.

"Cellular phone companies are doing well. Those in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia are doing well, and even those in India and China. DoCoMo in Japan is also doing well," he said.

Aside from the Philippines, PLDT's cellular subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. ranks as one of the most profitable companies in the country.

In the first nine months of the year, Smart continued to fuel PLDT's overall strong performance, clocking in a net income of P10.3 billion, up 22.2 percent from last year.

Smart also remained the country's biggest cellular service provider with more than 12 million subscribers as of end-October, fortifying the global system for mobile communications (GSM) subscribers of more than Philippine Telephone Corp.'s Talk N Text brand.

The introduction of lower denomination refloads via Smart Load also helped arrest the company's churn or disconnection rate. From 3.4 percent in the first nine months of 2002, churn rate dropped to only 2.5 percent in the same period this year.

Smart, as of mid-September, had 6.16 percent share of the local mobile phone market.

Dev't assistance . . .

From page B1

nce for the donor of the loans.

The DBM-Bilateralcom says, a group initiative for the physical accomplishment of a project, and as early 74 percent in 2003.

Neri said the donor community had commended the efforts of the Philippine government in improve the country's ODA performance during a climate's consultative meeting in November.

He attributed the improved ODA performance over the past two years to the government's efforts to clean up the ODA portfolio and streamline the bureaucratic project implementation.

Among the measures adopted were:

• to focus on results and outcomes of the projects and their impact on poverty alleviation and regional development;

• to conduct a cost efficiency review on all projects; and,

• to adopt appropriate strategies such as domestic technology, skills and services.

Neri said the government now welcomed the lower level of new ODA commitments, saying this was more consistent with the country's absorptive capacity.

The donor community, which comprises development countries and multilateral agencies such as the Asian Development Bank, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and the World Bank pledged $1 billion in loans and grants during the last consultative group meeting compared to the previous $1.2 billion.

The agri vote and the incoming president

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

If was the Dickensian party of one of the organizations affiliated with the Alyansa Agrikultura, a confederation of the federations of farmers and fishermen with more than one million members. The discussion had turned to the latest political shake-up: the pro-presidential elections.

Paradigm shift

During this discussion, a farmer leader said, "Instead of waiting passively for the presidential candidates to call us what they will offer, why don't we ... write the presidential candidates what we expect from them? They would then be challenged to measure up to our expectations. The one who measures up best will get our votes."

The farmer-leader's brainstorm, the fisherfolk motion, "Let us conduct nationwide consultations with our members and formulate an agriculture electoral agenda which we can present to each presidential candidate."

As the enthusiasm grew for this paradigm shift of farmers taking an assertive rather than a passive role for such an agenda, a third leader said, "Let us issue a notice of intent by Jan. 30 so that we can present our agenda to the presidential candidates in February. But tonight, let us already start discussing some important preliminary positions."

What follows are those of three positions. They are until needs considering in any significant reform program that will give justice to small farmers and fisherfolk.

Coconut levy

On Dec. 14, 2003, the Supreme Court decided that the coco levy funds amounting to approximately P100 billion were public funds. Therefore, all these funds should benefit the coconut farmers. The farmer leaders proposed that "farmers" in this context be interpreted to include not only the 1.6 million actual farmers, but also the 1.0 million coconut farm workers.

The Supreme Court initially gave the Sandiganbayan six months to determine the specific amounts of these funds, then extended this to another six months. But it was only last July, or six months after the second deadline, that the coco levy funds and the Coconut Industry Investment Funds were declared by the Sandiganbayan as owned by the coconut farmers.

COMMENTARY

However, these funds amount to only P20 billion, with the major portion of the total amount still surrounded by the Sandiganbayan. Some coconut farmer leaders suggested that the impeachment move against Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide was an attempt by powerful quarters to inhibit the further declaration of more coconut levy funds as belonging to the farmers.

The incoming president must make a strong commitment to push for the acceleration of the determination process in accordance with the legislative mandate; otherwise, any further delay may deprive the 3.5 million coconut farmers of the coconut levy funds due them since 1982, when the levy collections were stopped. The wait has already been too long.

Small fisherfolk

On June 11, 2001, Department Administrative Order 27 (DAO 17) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was signed. It provided guidelines for the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (Namria) to delineate municipal waters. In those waters, initially within 15 kilometers of the shoreline, only small fishers can allowed to fish.

Unfortunately, last March 17, 2003, Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun revoked DAO 27. This was because of a legal requirement that the Department of Agriculture (DA) must sign an order enabling Namria to commence delineating these municipal waters. It is now over nine months since this delineation was stopped, and still the order has not been signed.

The incoming president should immediately annul the revocation of this delineation so that these million small fishers can have priority access to these municipal waters for their livelihood, the fisheries in these protected areas will be replenished and preserved for sustainable development, and the municipal government can have the responsibility and control of their municipal waters in the spirit of local government autonomy. Here authors the final settlement of the controversy over the delineation as applied to offshore islands, the delineation of municipal waters should be allowed to proceed. This is because the stoppage proposes the already meager income of so many small fishers living below the poverty line.

Trade liberalization

Most agree that our agriculture and trade was liberalized much faster than what was required. We lowered several of our agricultural tariffs to 40 percent or less, or than other countries. We committed to several tariff reductions much lower than the mandated WTO bound rates. We minimized the shortest list of agriculture products exempted from tariffication in the Ascent Free Trade Common Effective Preferential Tariffs (Afta-CEPT). This was much shorter than the lists of most or countries that give much more support to their agriculture (e.g., Malaysia, Indonesia and even mainly 29,000 tariff lines) we submitted only 5,614 lines).

In comparison for these reductions, the incoming president must commit to the general principle of not lowering tariffs in agriculture and fisheries products easily unless two conditions are met: the subsidies of competing countries should be eliminated to the extent necessary for us to have a level playing field, and the private sector should fulfill its long unmet commitment to provide the necessary safety nets such as credit, technology transfer and infrastructure so that our agriculture and production can compete globally.

Conclusion

While acknowledging the presence of some good government programs, several small farmers and fisherfolk are convinced they have been neglected. They cite indicators such as the small size of the DA budget that not only does not conform to the legally mandated Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (Amia), but has also been further decreased for 2004.

The submission of an agricultural election agenda to the presidential candidates during the early months of February will be immediately assertive with the small farmers and fisherfolk will be taking in overcoming this neglect. This is bound to help not only the agriculture sector, but the entire agriculture-based economy as well.

(The author is chair of Agrewatch, a private sector initiative, former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrewatch@yahoo.com or telefax 02-9216810.)

Trend Spotting

LIFESTYLE

Ailyn Cheda Bansil-Formoso

'03 was the year of the updated terno

LAST year will be remembered as the year women, young and otherwise, seriously and obviously dressed up again. By "up," I mean long, floor-skimming gowns or ball gowns or terno.

Last week at the blowup/Christmas dinner at Bonnie Ramirez's new home in Sta. Rosa, Laguna—which is mega-ooh-ahh-inducing, by the way—the talk was this grand Intaco wedding where women were all in ball gowns, voluminous ones at that, like in a masquerade ball.

Indeed women in 03 went back to custom-made-wear designers (medium-priced, high-end), giving the local fashion business a shot in the arm. This demand added to the regular, keep-me-demand for wedding gowns, which (the retail industry can't get enough, Reggie Cardoso, who confessed to me she religiously buy dresses for ball gowns this year, noted that a good number were "rush orders" from women who at the last minute would decide to wear such elaborate gowns upon realizing that everybody else would. (The wedding of Eva Encinares and JM Lagdameo, for example, was a must-be-occasion.)

After almost two decades of dressing down, this fashion reversal came naturally, although somewhere behind the drift in sartorial fashion, which morphed to glamour and drama long ago.

While perhaps gone Manila's women the push to return to long evening wear was that there were good, high-profile occasions for it. To begin with, '03 became the year of Joe Salazar and the terno ball, and later, the exhibit inspired by him—both setting the tone as early elaborate plot lines set of most spectacular reactions in Joe's actual illness.

As many know, I was chatting with Joe about his life and bout with throat cancer when it dawned on me that although they've only in their late '30s or early '40s, Joe and his generation of designers posited the golden era of Philippine fashion—the '70s to the '80s when haute couture and RTW designers poured their genius and craftsmanship to create the cloth fashion. From terno wear, sequence suits to evening wear, before their counterparts in Hong Kong and Thailand did. Then, we realized that all that could go to oblivion if the achievements of the likes of Joe were not acknowledged and exploited for the young and future generations to be proud of. It was then that the idea of a Joe Salazar retrospective was born.

I sat down with Metropolitan Museum of Manila executive director Ian Rimando and Bench's Ben Chan, Joe's former friend, fellow artiste but who always appreciated the role of fashion in Philippine culture, the never designated it and save it, to bat, as dynamic as I wanted to hold on Ilonga magazine's Joe Salazar retrospective exhibit at the Met but Ian thought it would be in keeping with the Met's mandate if the tribute were to the terno as a whole and the Philippine design genius behind the national wear—meaning from the pre-Ramon Valera era to Joe Salazar and later the style Liaison generation.

One idea led to another. I found my ground on the Joe Salazar retrospective fashion, this time held at ABS-CBN's IL Terrazzo because I firmly believe that at this point, Joe deserved to have the limelight all to himself, his craft being that significant in his own fashion era. Valera had his time and although his serenity and genius are timeless... an inspire and be the source of pride of future generations—others had come after him, carving their own paths, and these would be the likes of Joe, Auggie Anne Enriquez and their immediate mentors Christian Espiritu, Ben Farinales. (Nisay Moreno is an institution in himself.)

His most absurd to consume a deserving terno artist —the kid in Sweden, which included a fashion show of ridiculously young designers paying tribute to Joe, and opening in early December was the Terno Exhibit of more than a hundred terno-spanning generations of designers and consumers, from Manila to Saigon.

There has never been a terno exhibit as comprehensive as this. It's ongoing at the Met until February. You must see it and feel yet still, if you have Filipiniana in waiting for the holidays, bring them down as they still are and remember what the Filipino is—a proud race whose artistic genius had reached a level of sophistication long before there was a GMA.

The exhibit, on the ground and upper floors of the Met, is ingeniously yet elegantly mounted. A young designer from the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Rhea Bonafelix, designed it. The entrance to the exhibit makes close right away the range of materials—from the big and extravagant to the minimal. For instance, among the pieces on the foyer is the classiest terno designed by Rhett Eala for Celine Lopez. A gravatte-dress serves as backdrop for the terno at the entrance. Another exemplar of Gino was to separate the minimalist black terno designed by Salazar for the Marcos women Imelda, Irene and Bongbong for the inaugural the last President in Bono. These stood against a backdrop of black-and-white paper panel that unfolded to the ground—a setting whose sheer elegance conveys in the entire the message that the terno can connote to today's era of interpretations.

What makes this exhibit unprecedented and unique is Joe's firm determination—which I admire supported in dismantling him from—to present the terno in various dimensions—from its social and historical nuances to its creation and craftsmanship. I thought this approach would be somebody at the best or heavy and scholarly contrived at the most, too much have thought the opportunity to gather brains from celebrity owners and scholarly unknown accessorizing designers [illegible] to be enjoyed in.

It's worked smoothly to gather the rare and almost-each significant designer-wear representation—from the terno worn by our beauty queens (Margie Moran Floirendo, for example, who won in the opening), to those designed by consumers in the provinces for a variety of occasions, including provincial balls.

He says terno style to Bali on a hardly seen work by the talented yet reluctant designer Mark Higgins, son of the fashion pillar Inday Higgins. Went by Joe Salazar Inday Higgins, it's a beautiful red terno that stands out because of its cut and silhouette. Unlike the usual terno, it's hardly restricted. It is asymmetric, the front raised to bare the legs. Worn this raised hemline apron layer and layers of black tulle—its stiff texture a foil to the soft red fabric—looks younger and elegant.

Another is a Joe Salazar fashion show for Inner Manors. What makes it outstanding is its bodice is draped using bikini. The way Joe draped the stripes of draped fabric and attached them using bikini to cutting-edge architectural strip.

The opening night last Dec. 11 at the Met, among here some women wore the terno or Filipiniana-inspired evening wear as noted me that the terno was not stuck in a time warp, that today's women can update it to suit today's style and lifestyle. Nobody has done this better than Imee Marcos-Araneta who, I believe, is one of the stylish women. (Politics aside, that is.)

That night, Imee was in a purple. Regular Albert terno, in bodice cut tight and loin to reveal just enough cleavage. What made her terno innovative was that it was cut way above the midcalf to reveal the stiletto and plaid ruffled hem reminiscent of pseudo-peg pantons. The plaid was in bright shades that contrasted against purple. It was chic, contemporary and young. Terno lense to be innovative and cutting-edge, without shedding it. The look was almost seamless, which is what real style should be. If other women are smart enough, they could take the cue from Imee and wear the terno closer to allow movement—perfect for after-six elegance. She could set this trend.

Another was Miss Bonnemere who wore a white and brief Mario Clara-inspired top with tight dress jeans. That was turbo elevated to chic.

And then from the Bonnemere terno ball, the photo that caught my eye was Lizelle Cojuangco's all-silver anglicized terno. Or from the Red Cross ball this year, there was Nina Ricasa in an embellished red terno. The only design highlight of which were the ribbed sleeves.

Indeed one good terno in a ball wears ribbon. 2003 was how the young Filipinas turned their inherent sense of fashion and style to herald a return to glamour and feminine elegance. And they did it mostly in the promotion of the terno.

TERNO TWO. Manchu Manahan Soriano, Maria's Zobel and Dindy Manrique Suarez

IN THE DETAIL. Nina Ricasa's flowing sleeve not in a sea of red with her mesh-butterfly sleeves

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sescon

Kate Jaime

IRENE Marcos-Araneta

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Several designers take on the challenge to update native fabrics with new designs

DANILO Fronco for ABAKA

FREDERICK Peralta for Caraga Region

RICHARD Pagcaliwagan for Region 11

EFREN Gicaspe for Region I

Indigenous but contemporary

MIKE dela Rosa for Region 7

Text by Alex T. Vergara
Photos by Chito Nuñez

SO you thought indigenous fabrics are good only for making costumes?

Several of the country's leading fashion designers met the challenge of the Department of Tourism to incorporate locally sourced native silk such as piña, abaca, sabitan, pina, abel Iloco, cotton and Philippine silk, among others, into contemporary wear—from formal to corporate attire for men and women.

Billed as "Meet the exciting Filipino," the event opens an fashion show at the Plaza Ann Ignacio featured the works of top designers Francis Libiran, Pacoffe, Benjo Valenzuela, Dhe Morales, Mike dela Rosa, Hans Palanca, Danilo Fontes, Eliseo Quiambao, Mare de Leon, Lonnie Fegidero, Larry Espinosa, Renee Salud and Rolando Melgar, among others.

Stock up the fashion entrepreneurs began a few months ago when the DOT invited the designers and assigned each of them to a specific region to research its materials as well as inspiration for their pieces.

Sourcing

Some big room's problem is the designers were discovered by themselves. There were enough materials to work, on since they were only asked to come up with three to five pieces each.

It would have been a different matter, however, had they been made to use the fabrics on a regular basis. But a few of these selected that such hard-to-source materials, being difficult to produce, are quite difficult to source when one's on a huge scale.

Aside from coming up with clothes that reflect their respective regions, the real challenge was to think of ways to make each piece wearable. And most of them delivered with clothes that were far from costume-y, but were in fact perfect wears for the ballroom or the boardroom.

Mike dela Rosa, for instance, used yakan fabrics to come up with easy-looking coats and dresses. Some were wrap dress, while others were paired or combined with more contemporary fabrics such as silk blouses with ruffles and criss-cross panels.

Dela Rosa learned to work around certain limitations. Since the fabrics were hand-woven and irregular, it was quite difficult for him to align both ends together. Still, such a flaw was hardly obvious on the multi-colored yakan models.

Danny dela Cuesta also zeroed in on the office woman with tailored separates fashioned from abaca. He drew inspiration, he said, from Christian Dior's so-called new look for the 1950s. The designer was at home with the fabric, having worked with it a number of times since the 1980s.

Benjo Ramos also chose to reinterpret the making from South Cotabato through classic silhouettes. A strong coat with a matching dress, for instance, looked back to the 1960s, all right, except for the fabric—bold horizontal stripes in varying shades of pink and violet obviously inspired from Mindanao.

In keeping with the colors of the region, even Ramos's two flowing Tagalogs made of just two dyed maroon and black. He accented them with silk-screen printing panels for that unmistakable southern flavor.

Hal Nuñez and his colleagues have given more time, they could have conducted in-depth research and done away with certain patterns to make the fabrics more mainstream. But doing so, he insisted, they would have robbed such region who discovered it and flavor.

See all clothes were mildly casual, basic pieces anywhere enough for evening affairs. Some Negros, sculpted dyed pifia and lace with versatile. The silk to come up with full gowns with beaded and embroidered skirts sourced from Laguna and Batangas.

Local silk

Speaking of Thai silk, Filipino designers can take their cue from Jim Thompson, who fashioned several body-hugging gowns made almost purely of Philippine silk sourced from Negros Occidental.

Espinosa, over the catalogues, came up with such eye-catching elements as a shawl fashioned from silk cocoons, which bother like cocoons that are usually shown of silk thread and matched dresses into mesh of home-grown silk.

Renee Palanca, a native son of Miag-ao, Iloilo, drew inspiration from the Miag-ao church to come up with sequinned gowns and floor-length coats made of chiffon. She then draped and combined the region's signature fabrics in classy and beaded material.

Frederick Peralta drew inspiration for his silk fabric from bright-colored banners made of duchess satin from the Caraga region's countryside plantations and the farmers' economic life in Bukidnon.

The principle, he said, became his inspiration for his appliqué with geometric designs. Peralta then draped his gowns with each of these black silk weaved from Mindanao. His choice of silk, white not only contrasted with the black silk. It made for a fine blends in the tender gabled in other structures call the region their home.

E-mail the author at vergara@inquirer.com.ph

KARGE Nuevas for Region 11

LARRY Espinosa for Region I

OLE Morales for Region 2

URBIDDA